



# Mission Critical: Get the Skills and Tools to Analyze and Share Learning Data

## Research Summary



Brandon Hall Group Research Team

February 2017

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## Mission Critical: Get the Skills and Tools to Analyze and Share Learning Data

### KEY FINDINGS

- Less than half of organizations have the in-house skills to analyze data.
- Most companies analyze data via their LMS.
- Most learning programs are not subject to analysis.
- Learning analysis rarely includes data from other systems.
- Majority of organizations share data with business leaders.

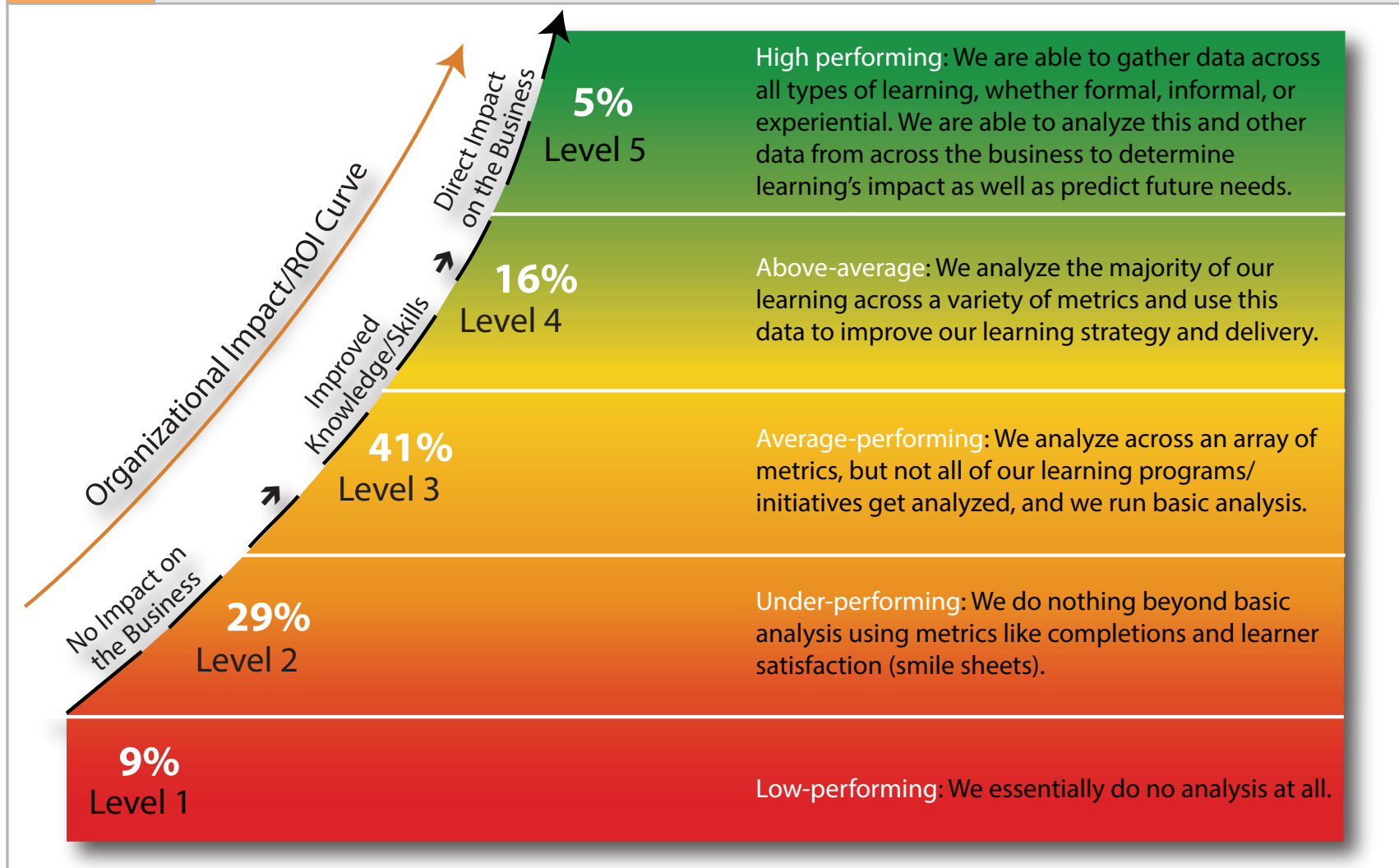
Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Survey (n=258)

### Summary

The wave of information known as Big Data has been growing exponentially in recent years, and organizations are hungrier than ever for more data. They collect data from systems all across the enterprise, certain that it holds the key to improving results. While companies have been getting better at collecting more meaningful data, understanding just what it means is another story.

Brandon Hall Group's 2017 Learning Analytics Study found that few organizations are able to run proper analysis on the learning data they are collecting and, therefore, are challenged to determine the impact learning is really having on the business. Of course, a big part of the problem is that companies are still heavily focused on more transactional data like course completions and grades, as found in Brandon Hall Group's 2016 Learning Measurement Study. Still, even if they are collecting the kind of metrics that help link learning to organizational and individual performance, very few are able to make much sense of it. In fact, overall, only about one in five organizations do an above-average job with analytics.

**Figure 1** Learning & Development Analytics Maturity Model



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Study (n=258)

While, in a general sense, companies are not so great with learning analytics, the study also found that high-performing companies (those with improved KPIs such as increased revenue, market share, customer satisfaction, etc.) do a far better job. More than 40% of these high-performers report being better than average with learning analytics, while only 9% of lower-performing companies say the same.

Despite the study finding a grim current outlook on learning analytics, the results for high-performers is promising. These results, along with the findings of the Learning Measurement Study, show that a focus on gathering performance- and behavior-based learning metrics, combined with the skills and tools to understand the data, is the required recipe for ensuring learning is having its full potential impact on the business.

The take-aways from our measurement and analytics research is simple and straightforward:

### Key Takeaways

- **Assess your internal analysis strength.**
- **Get the analytics tools to do the job.**
- **Incorporate relevant non-learning data.**
- **Share the analysis with the business.**

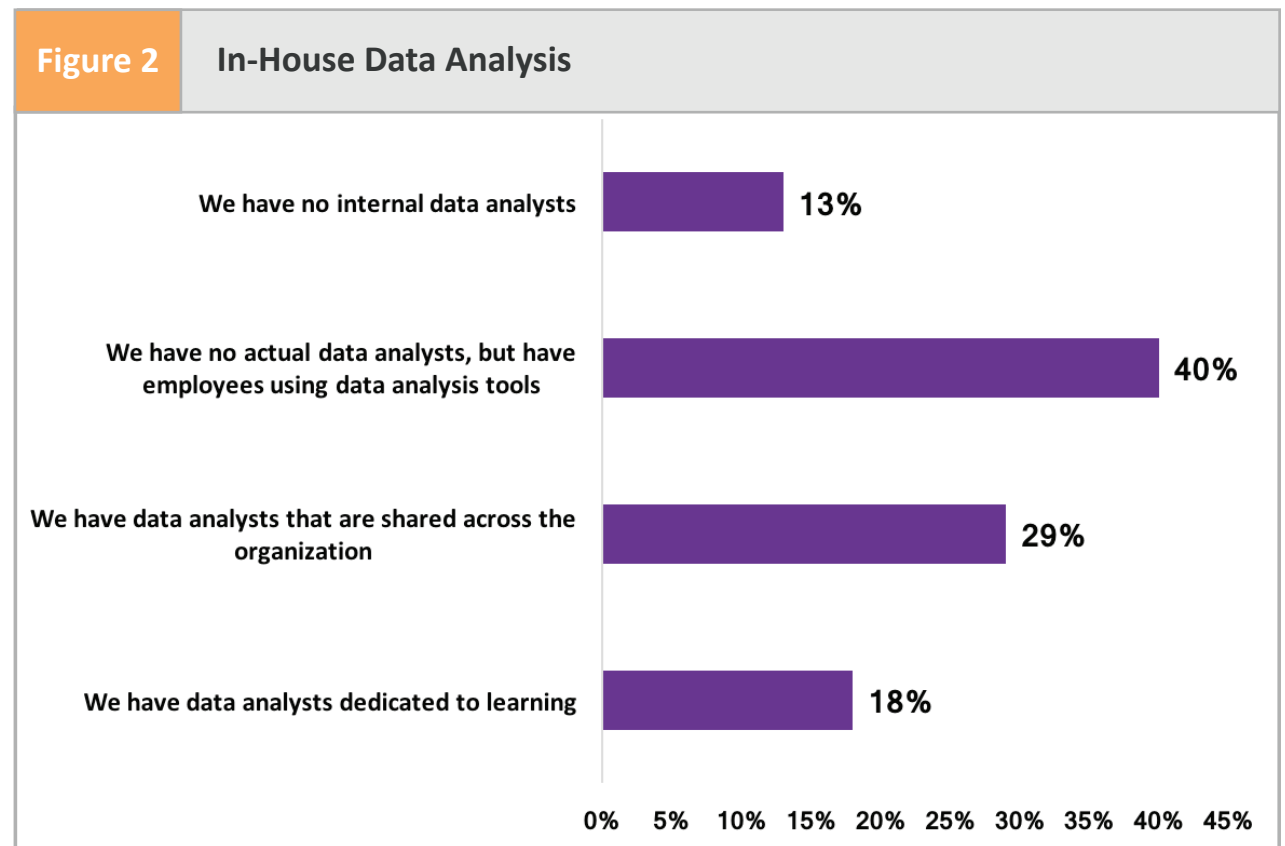
## ANALYSIS OF TOP 5 FINDINGS

### 1. Less Than Half of Organizations Have the In-House Skills to Analyze Data

The biggest reason so few organizations consider their learning analytics efforts above average is because they simply do not possess the skill sets internally to do the analysis. Many of the learning technologies that are generating the data do have analytics tools built in, and there are off-the-shelf analysis tools that don't require extensive analytics skills. However, those can't fully replicate or replace the ability to understand the data, ask the right questions, and communicate what the data is showing. The survey found that 47% of companies have data analysts on staff, whether specific to learning or generally within the organization.

The size of an organization obviously influences its ability to staff data analysts. Among large enterprise companies – those with 10,000 or more employees – 56% have people in analyst roles. For companies smaller than that, the number is 40%.

However, there is a stronger correlation between having actual analysts on staff and



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Study (n=202)

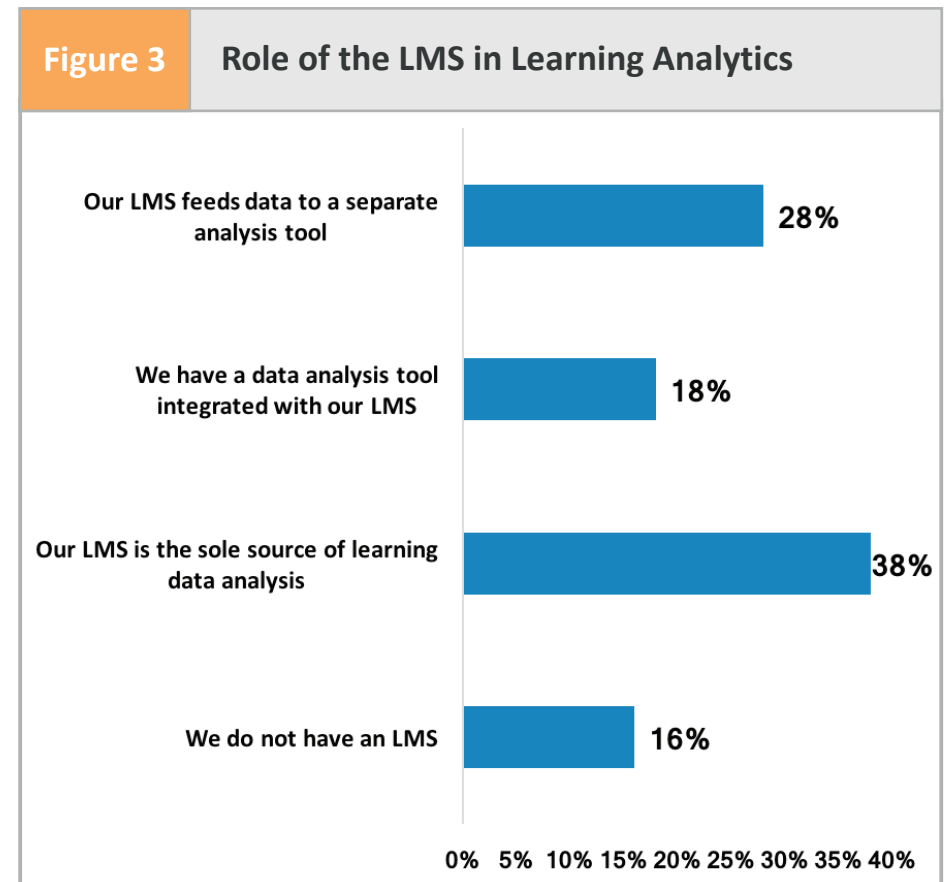
high organizational performance. Among high-performers (companies with increasing KPIs year over year), 59% have analysts in house. For everyone else, that number is 39%. And even though most companies do not have full-time analysts on staff, only about one quarter employ outside help for data analysis.

## 2. Most Companies Analyze Data via Their LMS

We saw in the previous finding that the most common approach to learning analytics is to have employees (who are not data analysts) look at the data via some sort of tool. The tool they most rely on is Microsoft Excel, with 80% of companies indicating they use the spreadsheet application for learning analytics. This is reflective of the fact that these are not data analysts doing the work. Companies with analysts typically use tools like SQL (18%), Access, (17%) or Tableau (15%). In many cases, the data isn't leaving the LMS to be analyzed.

For the 84% of companies using an LMS, two-thirds say their learning data analysis occurs within their LMS, either natively or via an integrated tool. The other one-third of organizations are exporting the data from the LMS into a separate tool (like the aforementioned Excel, Tableau, etc.).

While LMS solutions are offering more robust reporting and analytics than they have previously, they cannot compare to the horsepower of applications designed specifically for data analysis. But because most of these tools require a working knowledge of



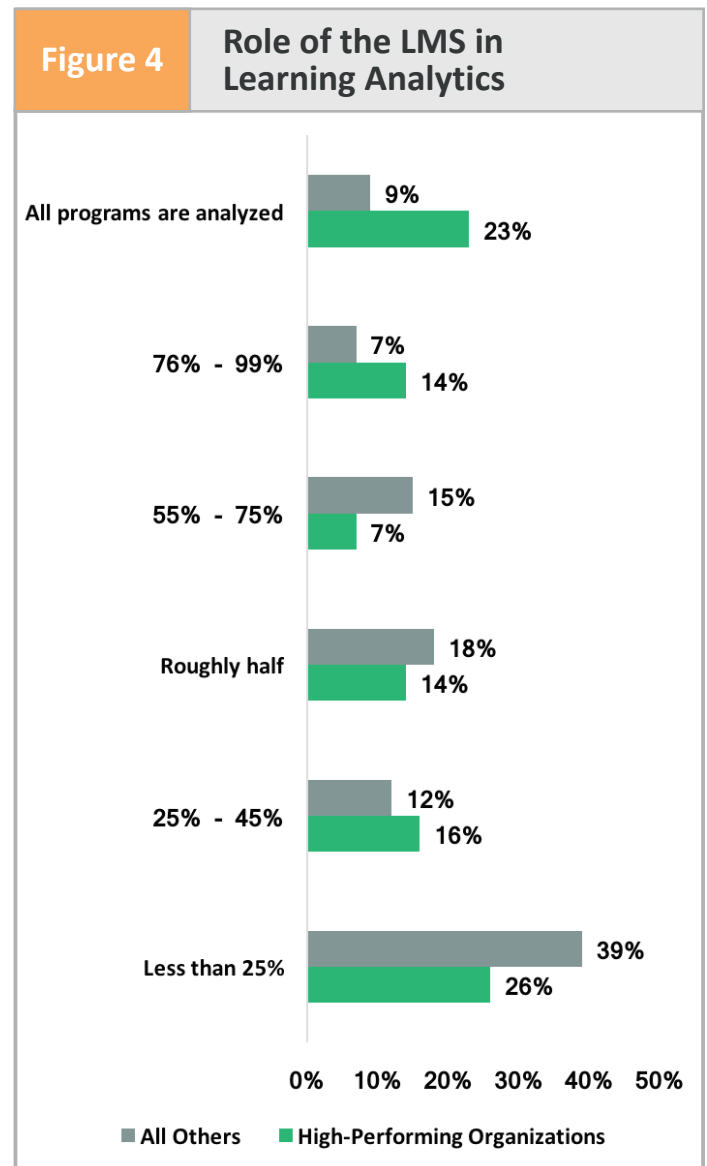
Source: 2016 Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Study (n=212)

statistics and analytics to be effective, companies eschew them for tools that are easier to use. This is not inherently a bad thing, but Brandon Hall Group’s research into LMS trends for the past several years finds that reporting and analytics is one of the least-liked and least-satisfactory aspects of current LMS solutions, and often one of the main reasons companies want to switch to new providers. Clearly these solutions are not quite getting the job done.

## 3. Most Learning Programs are not Subject to Analysis

In Brandon Hall Group’s Learning Measurement Study, we found that very few organizations are gathering metrics beyond Kirkpatrick Levels 1 and 2 for a large percentage of their learning programs. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that nearly two-thirds of companies say they run analytics on no more than half of their learning programs. When all the data a company has is completion rates, smile sheets, and test scores, there is not much analysis to be done.

Once again, however, there is a correlation between high-performance and learning analytics. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of high performing organizations say that all of their learning programs are analyzed, while only 9% of lower performers do that level of analysis. 37% of high-performers analyze at least three-quarters of learning programs, compared to 16% of all other organizations.



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Study (n=202)

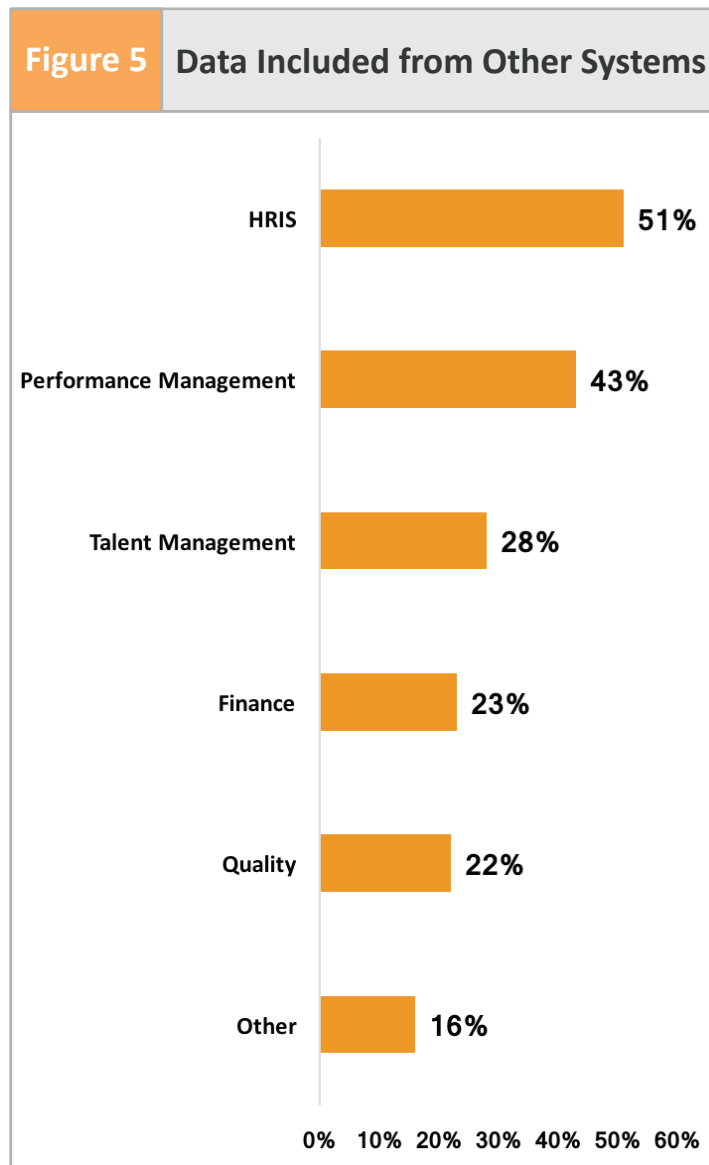


## 4. Learning Analysis Rarely Includes Data From Other Systems

One of the biggest drivers behind the need for more analysis is that companies have access to more data than ever before. Proper analytics can help an organization take information from every part of the business and understand the impact learning is having. Unfortunately, most companies are not taking advantage of what is available to them. For example, just over half of companies use data from their HRIS when running analytics for learning.

As for areas that arguably have a larger impact on the business, there is even less data importation. Performance management is typically considered the area most closely connected to learning, and just 43% of companies are using this data to measure their learning efforts. This result alone illustrates why there is such a disconnect between learning and performance. The connection only gets weaker for other parts of the business.

Here again is an example of high-performing organizations (HiPOs) leading the way. HiPOs are less likely to use HRIS data than other companies (47% to 53%), but this information is mostly transactional and doesn't necessarily connect to the business. For every other data source, however, high-performers are more likely to bring in data for learning analytics. In any case, the majority of companies are doing a poor job at using analytics to get the complete picture of learning's effectiveness and impact on the business.



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Study (n=151)

## 5. Majority of Organizations Share Data with Business Leaders

Once all of the analysis is done, it typically needs to be output in some fashion. Rarely is the person running the analysis the person that ultimately needs to see the results and make decisions based on what is found.

For more than half of companies, these reports are either the stock outputs of the tool they are using, or somewhat customized versions of them. This means that for companies using their LMS for analysis – which is most of them – they are limited not only by what is going into their analysis, but also what is coming out. High-performing organizations are more likely to create more relevant analysis, as 52% of them create fully customized outputs, versus 39% of all other organizations.

Almost as critical as the quality and substance of the reports is who actually gets to see the data. If the information isn't shared with the proper stakeholders, it may as well not exist at all. Learning analytics can be used to make decisions throughout the organizations, whether it has to do with performance management, compliance, succession management, etc.

Only 28% of CEOs are getting intelligence from learning. Of course, for larger organizations, it can be difficult for the CEO to keep tabs on everything that goes on in the company, but insight into such a large investment in people can be crucial.

The bright spot, however, is that 60% of companies are sharing their analysis with business leaders. This means that the people most directly impacted by learning outcomes are able to see what's working and what isn't.

<b>Figure 6</b>		<b>Who Gets to See the Final Reports/Visuals</b>
Business leaders		60%
CLO/head of learning		57%
Instructors		51%
Head of HR/Talent		45%
Instructional designers		45%
CEO		28%
CFO		13%
IT		10%
Other (please specify)		9%

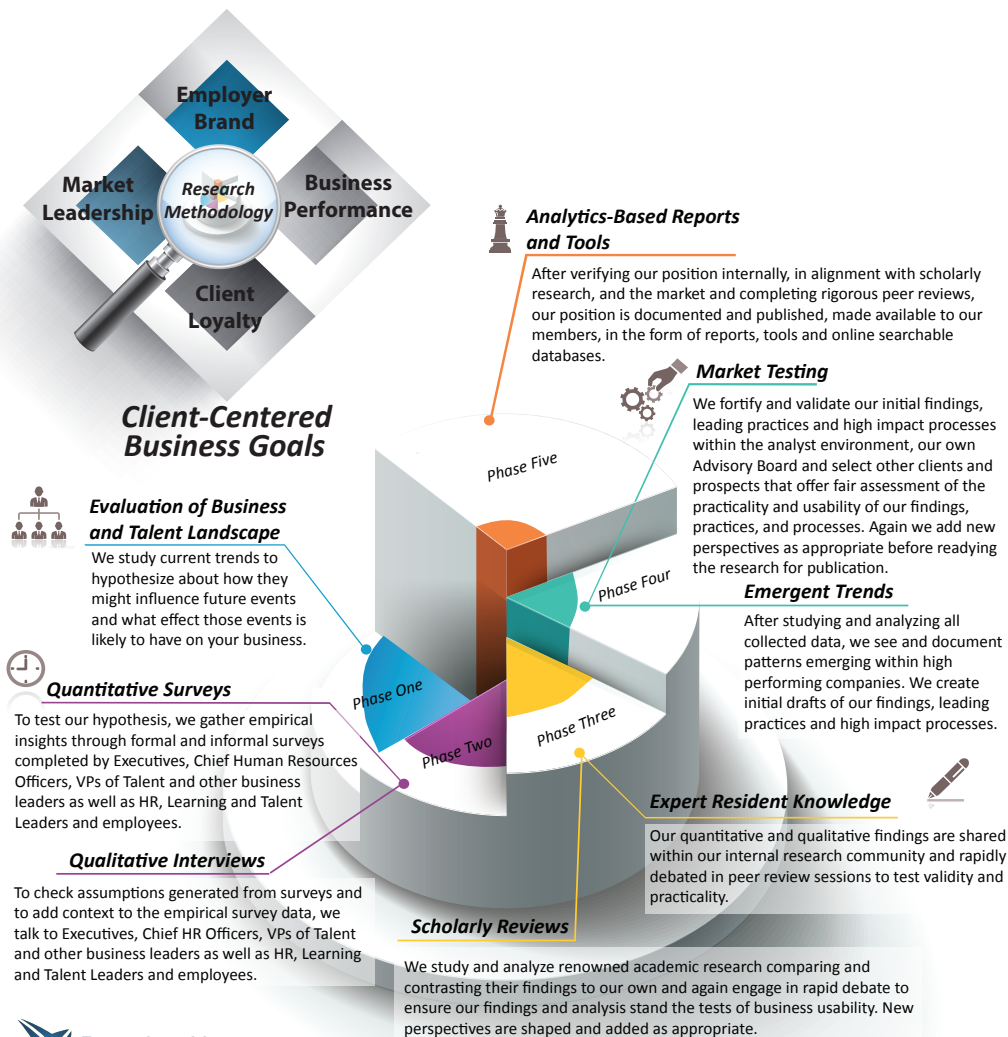
Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Learning Analytics Study (n=188)

## Key Considerations

Learning analytics may seem like an extravagance for many organizations with already limited budgets. The idea of having someone dedicated to crunching learning data may not be feasible. However, the fact is that Big Data has no ebb in sight, and information is the currency of today's successful businesses. Simply collecting data is no longer enough. It is critical for companies to be able to look at data from all over the business and be able to tell a story and answer questions around what is happening. Otherwise, learning is occurring within a vacuum, with no real insight into how it is affecting the rest of the business. Data analysis will be a critical role for organizations, and not just for learning. Here are some recommended action steps based on the research:

- **Assess your internal analysis strength.** Is it a role that can be shared across the organization? Is the company able to have analysts that specialize in HR, or even more specifically, learning? With specialization comes deeper understanding.
- **Get the tools to do the job.** A platform that provides basic analysis that requires little to no skill may seem attractive, but you may be getting just as much insight by doing nothing at all. If it is impossible to have someone using dedicated data analytics tools, make sure the alternative is able to answer questions important to the success of your business, and not just whether learners are completing their courses.
- **Incorporate relevant non-learning data.** If your analysis is only focused on learning data, it can be difficult to draw any conclusions around how learning impacts and is impacted by other parts of the business.
- **Share the analysis with the business.** Just like looking at learning data alone gives an incomplete picture, not sharing the results with other parts of the business keeps learning trapped in its own bubble. When business leaders know the outcomes learning is generating, it helps them plan as far as skills sets, competencies, bench strength, and a host of other areas.

## Brandon Hall Group's Research Methodology



Brandon Hall Group's 2017 Learning Analytics Study examines the ways organizations approach learning analytics and how they are trying to make sense of it all. The results of the study indicate that most organizations are challenged by learning analytics, especially when it comes to more informal learning. The online survey gathered 258 responses representing individuals from 36 countries and more than 32 different industries. The data was collected in late December 2016 and analysis was completed in January 2017.

## About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management.

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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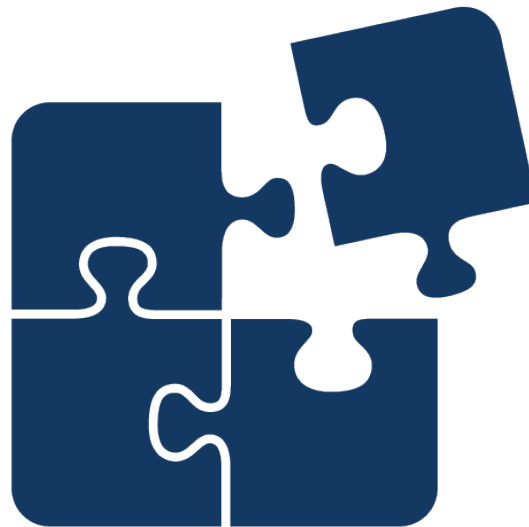
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