



From Activity
to Impact:

How COVID-19 Has Changed Training in the Workplace

2021



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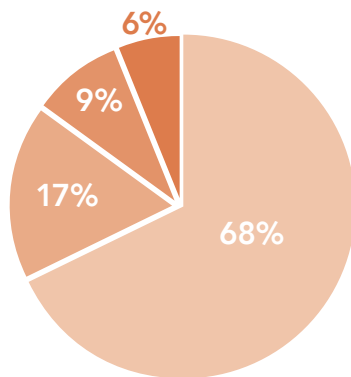
Understanding the Extended Enterprise

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on organizations all over the globe. The training function was not immune to these changes. The level of disruption brought about by the pandemic presented challenges and opportunities, while completely changing the training landscape. Overnight, people could no longer go into the office or gather for training. Many workers were obligated to adjust to working remotely.

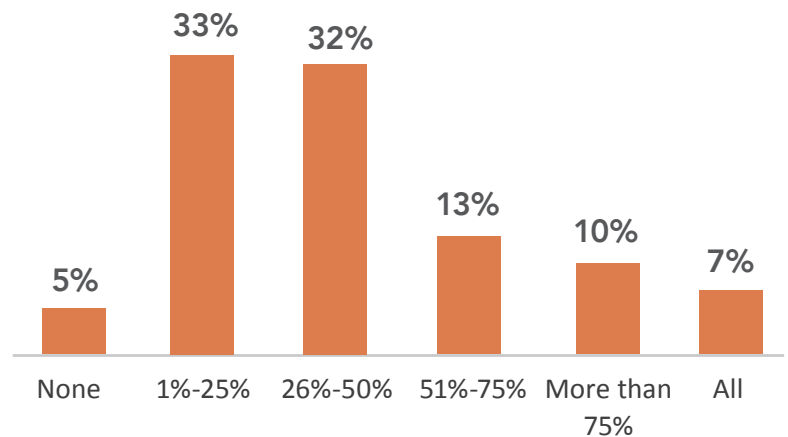
And while it is still to be seen just how widespread remote work will remain, there is no question there will be more of it in the future. Prior to the pandemic, a mere 15% of companies said that more than half of their workforce was remote. Twice as many companies believe half or more of their workers will be remote once their return to work strategies roll out.

Remote Workforce Prior to Pandemic

- 0%-25%
- 26%-50%
- 51%-75%
- More than 75%

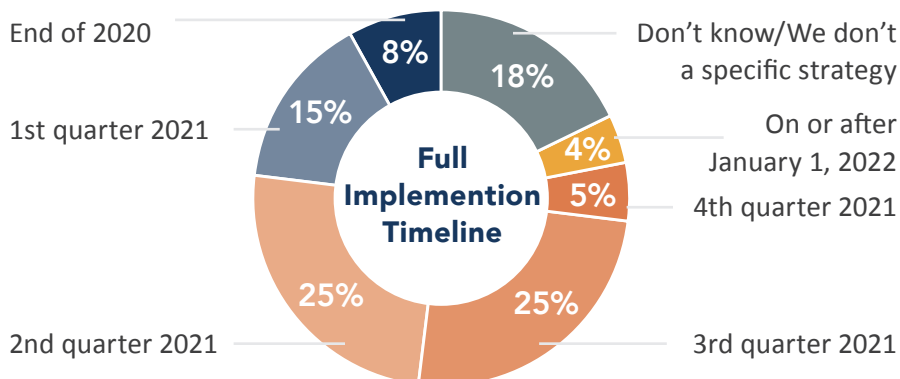


Remote Workforce after Return to Work Implementation



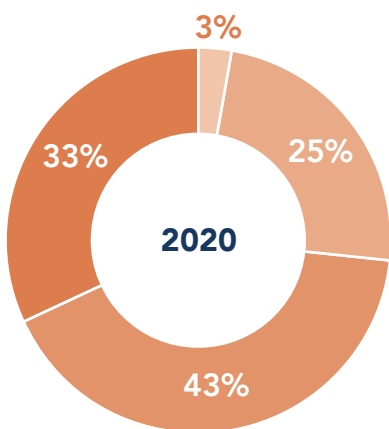
Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study

But this chaos and uncertainty will linger. There is no true consensus on what a “return to work” strategy should look like or when it can be rolled out by all. Some companies had it sorted by the end of 2020 and others have their eye on 2022.



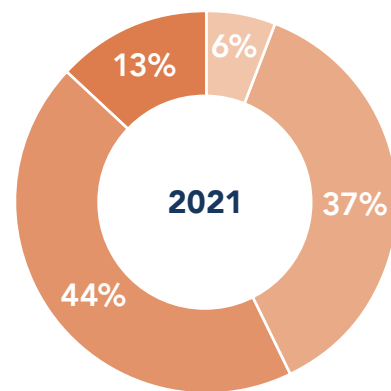
Adding to the chaos has been the impact on training budgets. Projected **investments in L&D for 2021 were way down over 2020 and learner budgets declined for nearly half** of organizations.

Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study

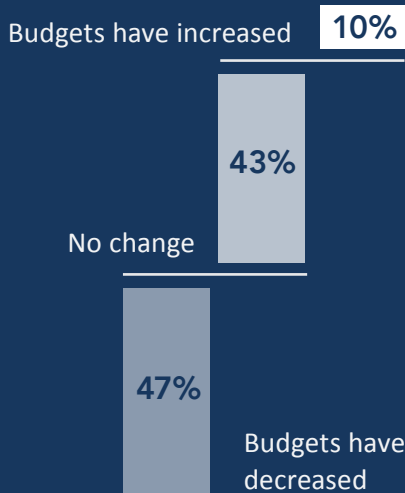


Learning & Development Investment

- None
- Small
- Moderate
- Heavy



Per-Learner Budgets



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group

All of this adds up to an environment where training departments are asked to do a lot more with a lot less. This is acutely felt in the extended-enterprise training space, where companies try to continue delivering engaging, impactful learning experiences to external audiences such as resellers, dealerships, franchisees and others. A lot of this training was happening face-to-face and was unable to be

reconciled as quickly as the learning for internal learning audiences, who may be remote.

To better understand the challenges these organizations face and how they address them, a series of studies and interviews were conducted with organizations and training leaders specifically focused on the topic.

A Big Ship Can Turn on a Dime



Quite often, when discussing the nature and speed of business change, thought leaders compare large organizations to cruise ships that cannot quickly change course when required. But in speaking to some large OEM and franchise organizations, it turns out these companies can and do adjust quickly when necessary.

For both large and small organizations, a consistent theme was that they were

impressed with how fast they could adjust and pivot, though they would deviate from standard practices to maintain the training missions. In essence, many training functions were dragging the organization along, saying that these changes needed to occur if the company wanted to keep doing what it needs to do.

For example, one major automotive OEM said that in the beginning, they shut

down their technical training centers and were immediately uncertain how to move forward. But the technical trainers worked out their own solution. They used cameras and their technical knowledge to create virtual training sessions for the technicians, allowing them to continue with training. The organization picked up the momentum and leveraged existing technology to grow the program.

The interviews found that 95% of the organizations adapted their training programs to address the impacts of COVID. The few that didn't were hampered by the physical limitations of their training — large equipment and machines. Three-quarters of these companies adapted immediately, getting back to being operational within two to three months of shutting down. For half of

the companies that adapted, a big reason was they already had initiatives and pilots in place for digital and virtual learning, so they were able to accelerate those programs to meet the needs of the new environment.

More importantly, though, is that half of these companies said they were able to continue their training without any impact or delay from their normal programs.

This means that despite the pandemic, they were able to onboard new franchisees and keep people trained and certified.

Ultimately, all of the companies that did adapt indicated they had never seen their company and training teams move and change as quickly as they did to address the demands created by the pandemic.

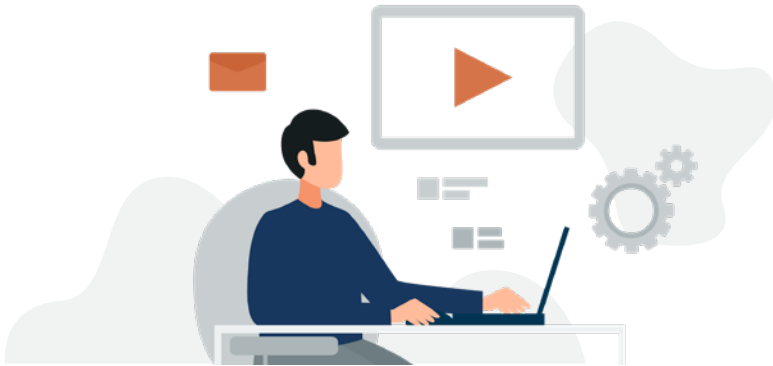
RECOMMENDATION

Organizations simply are not too big to change. This pandemic experience has shown that **when push comes to shove, these changes can be made.**

This environment calls for companies to accelerate their digital transformation so they can meet the immediate needs of the business and be prepared for the future. Organizations should leverage this experience to help accelerate and push to adapt quickly and change in a more aggressive and timely manner.



Trainers Want to Train



Trainers in the extended-enterprise environment occupy a unique role. They are a liaison between the organization and the external learning audiences. They are the front line with partners, franchisees and technicians who may have no other relationship with the business.

These are the people driving much of the change throughout the pandemic. They are the ones who would go to the proverbial drawing board and figure out how to get training done, and adopting new — and adapting

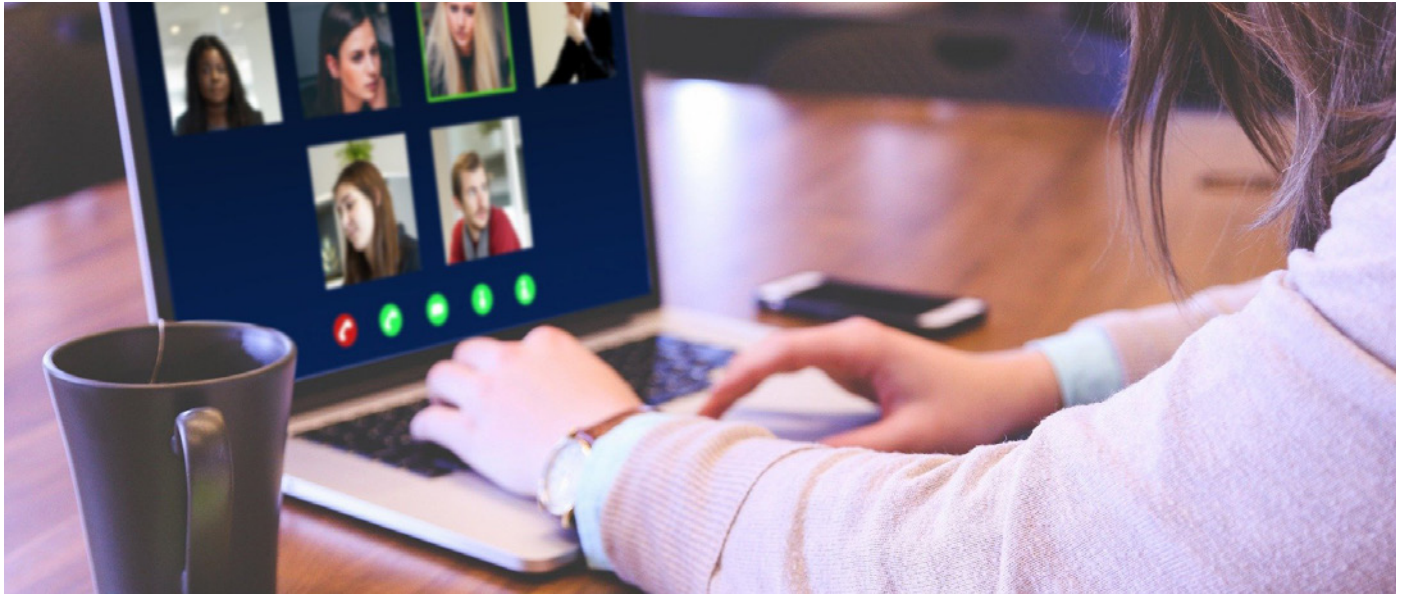
old — technologies to do it. They are trainers who were able to go back, look at the content and recreate something that could be delivered immediately. This kind of quick-change adaptability was then adopted by the organizations.

The role of the trainer in the extended-enterprise environment changed dramatically. They were no longer simply “trainers,” but also counselors and consultants, helping external businesses adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic.

TRAINERS DRIVING CHANGE

- Trainers were the first to pivot: “How do we keep training?”
- Trainers adopted new technology quickly to deliver training
- Trainers used their tools and creativity to deliver hands-on training
- Trainers adapted and organizations followed
- Trainers took on new roles as COVID impacted external businesses

Virtual Meeting Technology



Once the pandemic set in, organizations quickly shifted to using virtual-meeting platforms extensively to keep people together. Soon, everyone found themselves in endless Zoom or Microsoft Teams meetings. Training was no different. These tools seemed like an easy solution to the problems presented by everyone working from home.

However, during the Information Exchanges, it became clear that this was likely not the best approach. All of the organizations that

adopted these platforms for training found that their traditional approach to instructor-led training and content did not translate well to virtual-meeting platforms. The breakdown was not in the meeting platforms themselves, but the failure to adapt the content and the training approach.

There was a common arc to leveraging virtual-meeting platforms. First, the trainers would simply present their in-person material. Then they would realize

they needed to adapt the scheduling that was used for ILT. People did not want to be in virtual meetings for as long as they may have been in a class. Long-form, multiday, multisession programs had to be broken up and adapted to fit the new model. Shorter blocks, limited to a maximum of two hours, were much preferred. This also meant extending multiday sessions over the course of weeks, which led to higher engagement among learners.

The final evolutionary phase was a rebuild of the content to mesh better with the virtual tool to be more effective. Many trainers created on-demand videos rather than delivering the content synchronously in a meeting platform. This enabled meeting time to be devoted to more collaborative learning and coaching.

The experiences of the organizations participating in the Information Exchanges mirror those of the companies surveyed by Brandon Hall Group. In April 2020, the most common formats for replacing ILT were meeting tools, virtual classrooms and webinars. As the pandemic continued, the use of those platforms fell, while eLearning, microlearning and videos increased.

'Go-To' Tools for Converting Live-ILT Learning

● April 1, 2020 ● Now



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group

RECOMMENDATION

Traditional instructor-led training sessions **simply do not work on virtual-meeting platforms.**

Learners need more frequent and shorter sessions, as well as the ability to deploy their new skills immediately. In traditional, in-person, multi-day programs, learners have to wait days or weeks before applying new skills. Additionally, the trainers themselves need to learn the right skills for delivering in a virtual environment. Many of the approaches they've developed over years of in-person training do not translate virtually.

There's No Replacement for Hands-On Training

Something that's often missing from the learning-technology conversation is that a lot of training is extremely hands-on. Product familiarization, technical training and service training in a pandemic environment is a huge challenge. Industries such as medical equipment and aviation are highly regulated and have very high-risk training requirements. Managing the changes the pandemic presented became quite challenging.

For example, one of the organizations in the Information Exchanges is the largest ice-machine manufacturer in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic set in just as their normal training season ended and they entered their busiest repair cycle. They took as much of their hands-on training for things such as putting the machines into

sleep mode for cleaning and other procedures, and quickly converted them to videos.

This training was well-received and effective, as the camera angles were actually better than trying to look over a trainer's shoulder in person. They could also hear better since they were not scattered around a large training room. But, ultimately, there were still hands-on elements of the training they could not fully replicate.

The story was the same for many of the organizations in the study. Half said they relied heavily on hands-on ILT for training on product service and repair. They used virtual meeting tools as much as possible and instructors became very creative in using multiple video sources to create an in-person proxy learning experience. These video elements are being leveraged as reinforcement and job aids for learners moving forward.

RECOMMENDATION

Hands-on training was impacted the most by COVID-19.

The ability to turn a wrench and learn is the key to staying certified and compliant for many reasons. Organizations should develop the tool sets for trainers to provide as close to hands-on training as possible to limit the impact, and actively develop workarounds when training can't be completed. Sending regional trainers to small groups of learners, rather than gathering a large group in a training center, was one common workaround. Finding elements of the in-person training that can be converted to video or other digital formats is important and will continue to serve the organization past the pandemic.

Easier Access = More Opportunity

Despite the chaos the pandemic produced, many organizations found that as they adapted their training programs, learner engagement increased. Offering a wider variety of on-demand, digital and virtual options gave learners much more flexibility with scheduling and made the training much easier to access. Organizations were also able to engage a much wider learning audience with less effort.

This also meant that the engagement with learners and their organizations was more frequent and somewhat continuous, which strengthened the relationships. Learners were able to brush up on various skills on their own schedules. They no longer had to wait for a quarterly scheduled event.

In these types of extended-enterprise environments, training resources had been typically constrained by a lack of availability of the trainers and the learners. By leveraging digital solutions, suddenly a trainer's expertise was widely available to more learners at any given moment.

These approaches are likely to continue post-pandemic as companies recognize the advantages of digital learning tools, using them in conjunction with in-person events. Brandon Hall Group's COVID-19 research finds that for 76% of companies, the increased use of digital learning related to the pandemic will either stay at these levels or increase as things return to normal. Just 11% of companies believe they will go back to the same or higher amount of in-person training as they were doing pre-pandemic.

Role of Digital Learning as Pandemic Eases

44% Use of digital learning will remain the same or perhaps increase

32% Use of digital learning will decrease slightly but remain well above pre-pandemic levels

13% Use of digital learning will return to about the same levels as before the pandemic

11% ILT will be used the same or more than before the pandemic

Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group

RECOMMENDATION

The move to VILT **opened the doors to more students.**

As organizations contemplate their return-to-work strategies, they cannot lose sight of digital learning's impact. The learners and organizations that gravitated to a virtual approach to training were often the same ones that were regular attendees to more traditional training services. In a post-pandemic world, organizations need to retain virtual and digital training as part of their training calendars and delivery services.

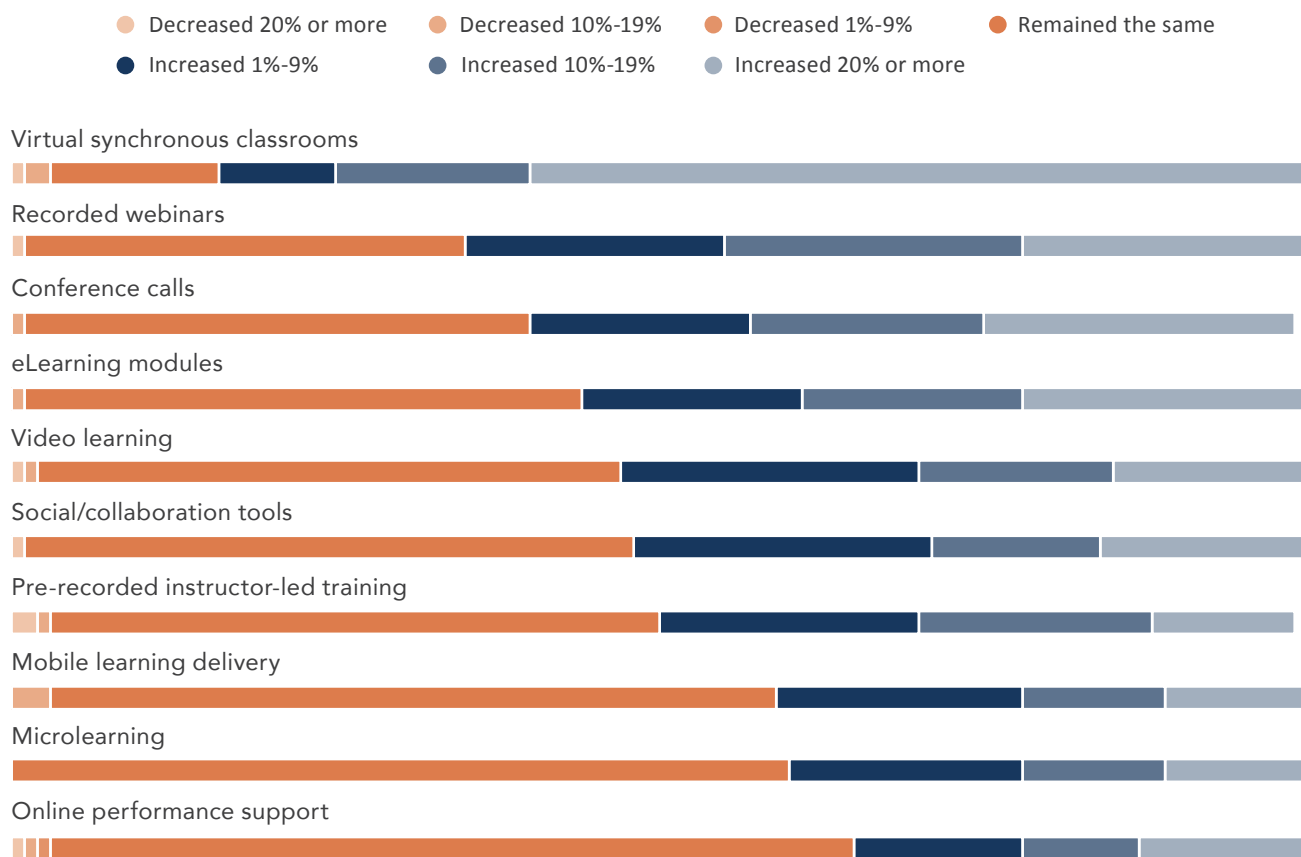
Cost and Operational Impacts

The pandemic has had wide-ranging economic impact for organizations globally. Brandon Hall Group research found that 34% of companies expected their L&D budget to decrease over the course of 2021. Additionally, nearly half of companies said their per-learner budgets decreased as a result of the pandemic.

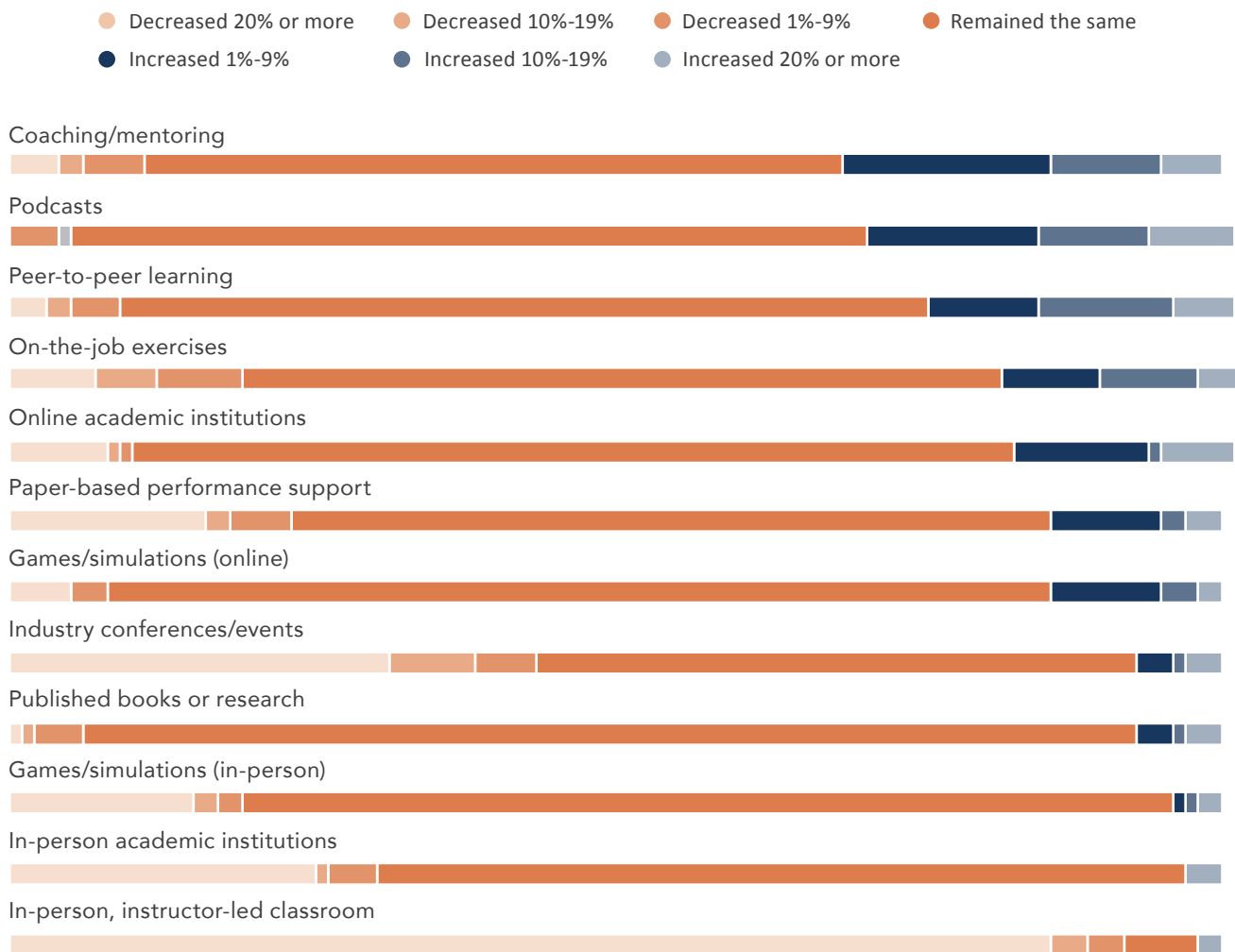
In the specific case of extended enterprise learning, where many companies are actually generating revenue via their training, most companies said that the resulting reduction in

training revenues were offset by a reduction in expenses related to things like travel and facility procurement.

The cost reductions were so significant for 25% of the companies interviewed that they said they weren't sure they could return to their pre-pandemic operating models. Operationally: most organizations that adopted VMT approaches will maintain and/or preserve some, if not most, of the virtual training calendars and offerings they developed.



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study

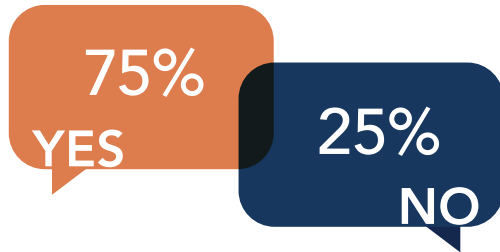
RECOMMENDATION

As things return back to normal, the **cost of conducting virtual and digital training** should allow organizations to expand their offerings to retain the benefits this model generated (higher participation, better engagement, etc.), while still delivering more traditional ILT services.



Key Takeaways

Do you feel that your organization's learning department/function emerged stronger coming out of 2020?



Source: Brandon Hall Group Learning 2021 Pulse Survey

The COVID-19 pandemic permanently shifted many aspects of business but it has not all been negative. It forced companies to focus on what is important to them and to rethink how they approach everything, including training. The good news is that in a Brandon Hall Group pulse survey, three-quarters of companies said their learning function emerged stronger coming out of 2020. It is critical that companies keep this evolutionary momentum and use the pandemic as a way to discover new solutions to age-old problems.

Big ships can turn on a dime.
(Who knew?)

ORGANIZATIONAL

Trainers want to train.

ORGANIZATIONAL

ADAPTATION COMES IN MANY **FORMS**

Easier access creates more opportunity for training — and higher participation.

ORGANIZATIONAL

Transition to virtual has its benefits and drawbacks.

APPROACH

There is no replacement for hands-on training.

CONTENT

Traditional ILT isn't directly adaptable to virtual technology.

CONTENT

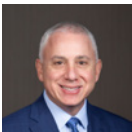
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