Brandon Hall Group

Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

2023

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Executive Summary

If companies want to put employees in a position to win, they must help people learn more and do so at a faster pace. It can seem next to impossible when each individual has unique learning requirements, especially when the organization has thousands or even tens of thousands of employees.

Organizations must be able to create and deliver contextual, personalized learning to develop career paths, retain top talent, and drive business growth. Personalized learning is the process of providing learning experiences that are based on an employee's professional and personal needs and interests; and making that learning accessible in a venue and time that is best for the employee. The workforce has grown increasingly mobile, remote, and dispersed, and most learning organizations have struggled to keep up with these shifting dynamics.

Companies are now completely rethinking and re-engineering their learning strategies, realizing that a much wider set of delivery channels is needed to meet a rapidly evolving set of user expectations. Learners expect the technology and content associated with learning to behave the way technology and information behave in their everyday lives. They want personalization, context, and relevance, and they want it immediately accessible.

To what extent is your organization delivering personalized learning?

5%
36%
37%
8%
14%

1 (Not at all)
2
3
4
(Very high extent) 5
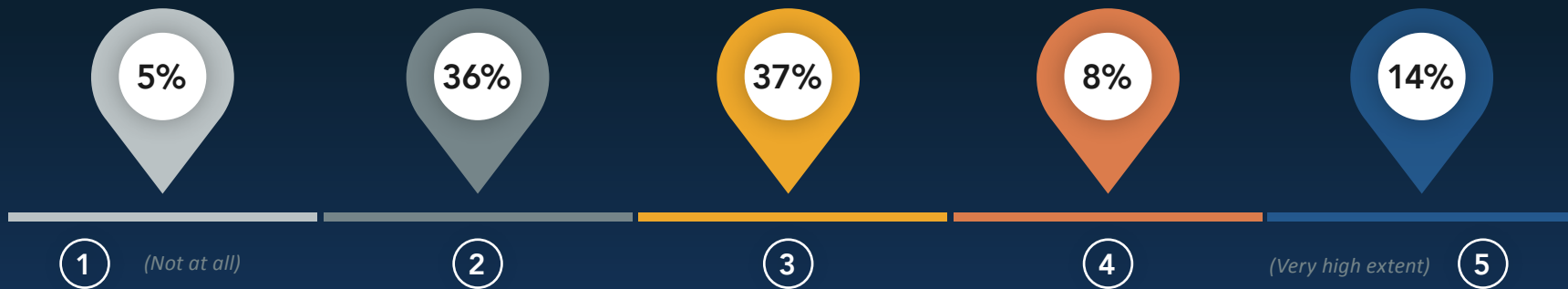
Source: Brandon Hall Group, Transforming Learning & Development for the Future of Work
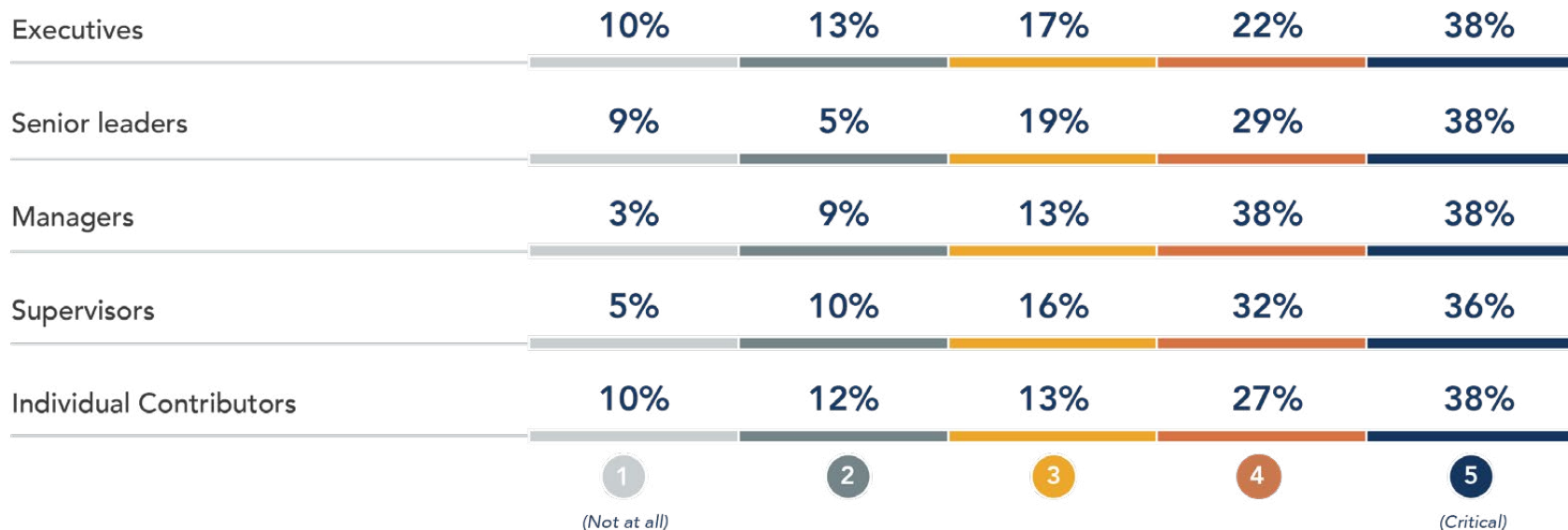
Current State

Previous Brandon Hall Group Research finds that only about 37% of companies believe their current approach to learning is strongly positioning them well to develop the skills they will need in the future. As organizations rethink the overall learning strategy, there is an increasing focus on delivering a more personalized and contextual experience to drive better results. Today's learners need learning that supports them where and when they need it, providing relevant insight that they can connect to both their personal and professional goals.

This strategy is no longer just for the development of leaders and high potentials, either. A personalized approach that is scaled across the entire organization is what companies need to ensure they are effectively building the right skills in the right places to respond to business needs.

How important is it for your organization to deliver personalized learning to each of the following?

	1 (Not at all)	2	3	4	5 (Critical)
Executives	10%	13%	17%	22%	38%
Senior leaders	9%	5%	19%	29%	38%
Managers	3%	9%	13%	38%	38%
Supervisors	5%	10%	16%	32%	36%
Individual Contributors	10%	12%	13%	27%	38%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

Personalization is a critical part of driving learner adoption and engagement. This is especially true during an employee's early days with the organization. Any training they receive during the onboarding period will set their perception of what learning will be like moving forward. If it is a non-stop barrage of generic, boring compliance training, it can be next to impossible to generate enthusiasm for future learning programs. If you can provide a connection to the learner from day one, it becomes easier to inspire and empower learners from the start and continue as their career grows and evolves.

Complexities

Most employees simply are not getting access to the knowledge and information they need when and where they need it. Organizations do not know enough about how their people learn or what they should be learning. Traditional approaches to developing and delivering learning programs are not suited to meet the ever-shifting needs of the business and the people within it, but companies have difficulty instituting real change.

To what extent do you consider the following to be challenges in delivering personalized learning at scale?

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

3.55
Our managers do not play a large enough role in learning

3.33
Our culture is built on event-based learning

3.25
A lack of understanding of neuroscience or neurocognitive learning principles

3.28
We do not have the technology ecosystem in place

3.12
We believe it would be too difficult to administer and maintain

3.09
We believe it would be too expensive

2.97
We believe it would be too time-consuming

3.03
We don't have a good handle on what our learners need

2.91
Our learning organization does not have the proper skill set

2.82
We are too invested in the way we already do things

(1) Not at all

(5) Very high extent

By definition, people are learners. Every day they are learning and growing. People want to succeed and L&D teams need to make sure they are giving people the tools they need to be successful. The seeds of a strong learning culture are there. It is up to leadership to influence, motivate and enable people to help it grow. We see in the research that companies may believe personalization would be too expensive or time-consuming, but time is not the enemy here. It is inaction.

How important are the following elements for effective personalized learning?

4 or 5

88%

Alignment between learning and the objectives of the business

① Not at all   ⑤ Critically important

82% Alignment between learning and the personal/ professional goals of the learner

79% Self-paced learning

75% Leveraging multiple modalities

72% Manager involvement

72% Coach/mentor feedback

68% Learner input

66% Recognition and reward for learning

50% Artificial intelligence/ machine learning

47% Learning that leverages neuroscientific principles

38% Learning delivered in multiple languages

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

There are many elements that go into creating personalized learning, but it must be seen as a process, rather than a one-time transformation. One of the key elements for successful personalization is alignment. That means alignment between the learning and not only individual goals, but business goals as well. This is where the "what's in it for me" of learning is found. By aligning learning with corporate objectives, we can give learners real context around what they are learning and why. Learning becomes less of a transactional exercise and more of a performance booster. This alignment also allows learners to give specific feedback about how the learning helped them achieve their expected outcomes. Collecting and acting upon learner feedback is important to make sure learning is truly relevant and impactful.

Consequences

In a one-size-fits-all learning environment, people feel little to no connection with the learning they are given. This lack of alignment, connection, and context is causing low adoption, engagement, and retention when it comes to learning. Learning ends up feeling disjointed and separate from the job, keeping people from being actively engaged in their development and causing the organization's skill gaps to remain or even widen.

The kinds of connections personalized learning can create for learners have a reverberating impact on the employee's entire work experience. Brandon Hall Group's research finds that companies that are taking this approach are seeing benefits that are meaningful to employees and how they view themselves within the context of the organization and its culture.

To what degree do you believe your learners see each of the following as a benefit of their learning journeys with your organization?

4 or 5

1 Not at all
5 Very high degree

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

Greater confidence in performing work which opens up new growth opportunities
74%

Betterment as a person both personally and professionally
68%

Contributions made are more valued and respected
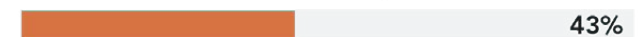**60%**

Stronger bond with the organization
57%

Sharpening cognitive and executive skills functioning
51%

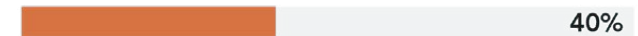Individuality and diversity of thought and actions are embraced and respected by their leaders
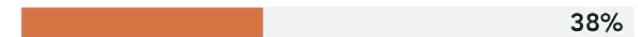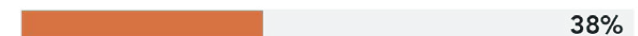**46%**

Achievement of maximum compensation levels
43%

Standing out amongst colleagues as a key member of their team
40%

Building a greater sense of wellbeing
38%

Garnering more rewards and recognition
38%

If we are able to build are more learner-focused, contextual experience, it is not just the learner that benefits. The business also sees powerful impact and benefits as well. It creates an environment where learning is driving performance, building overall employee engagement, and strengthening the business's ability to respond to market complexities.

To what degree does personalized learning have a positive impact on the following outcomes? `4 or 5`

Improving individual performance
95%

Improving learner adoption and engagement
94%

Improving employee engagement
92%

Improving the depth and length of learning retention
86%

Promoting a learning-focused organizational culture
86%

Improving organizational performance
86%

Improving the organization's competitive advantages
79%

Building an inclusive culture
71%

Supporting employee brand/employee value proposition
68%

Optimizing talent mobility
68%

Driving employee well-being
58%

Compressing onboarding time
52%

① Not at all   ⑤ Very high degree

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Building Personalized Learning Across the Organization

Questions to Consider

To effectively create a personalized learning environment that matches the needs of the learners and the scale of the business, organizations must answer several critical questions, including:

> Is our learning strategy well-aligned with both learner and organizational outcomes?

> Which tools and technologies will help facilitate personalized learning at scale?

> Are we able to capture enough data about employees and their learning to drive more personalization?

> Are we properly leveraging the role of managers in the learning experience?

> Are we providing learning in enough different media and modalities for learners to build their own experiences?

Brandon Hall Group POV
High-Level Strategies for Personalizing Learning at Scale

1

Personalization starts with business goal alignment

In order for learning to be contextual for learners, it has to have a strong connection to business goals. This alignment is what makes it possible to build context around learning that shows learners what the programs mean for the business and, in turn, what it means for them. A clear connection to business outcomes allows L&D teams to provide learners with programs that are aligned with the learner's role, goals, and interests.

This cannot be accomplished without a strong relationship between L&D and business stakeholders. By presenting learning as a strategic tool to reach specific outcomes, L&D and the business can begin speaking the same language and working together on programs that deliver specific, targeted outcomes.

2

Develop a technology roadmap that focuses on personalization

Assess the current technology ecosystem for strengths and weaknesses in providing a wide variety of learning experiences and the ability to personalize those experiences at scale. In some cases, the path forward may only require a reimagining of how to use current tools. For others, it means looking for new or additional solutions. Look for solutions that leverage AI and machine learning for recommendations and contextualization. Deep, seamless integrations with other systems are also a key requirement.

3

Develop a comprehensive data strategy

The entire organization relies on data to operate. Every tool, system, and application is generating a steady stream of data. L&D needs to have a solid plan for how they collect data, what data is important, and how they can leverage data from other systems. Just like with consumer-facing technology experiences, like Amazon or Netflix, data is what drives personalization. Therefore, your learning environment will only be as smart and personalized as what is fed into it.

4

Recognize the critical role managers play in the learning experience

Very often, the role of the manager is a huge blind spot for organizations when it comes to learning. As L&D teams try to build more personalized, continuous learning experiences, it is critical they involve managers. They are the ones who are closest to the learners and what their daily workflow looks like, as well as specific team needs, strengths, and weaknesses. In order to scale personalization, L&D needs to rely on managers to provide insights, rather than every individual learner.

5

Provide a wide array of learning modalities and opportunities

The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to learning is the antithesis of personalized learning and is holding organizations back from delivering better results. Offering learning in a variety of formats so learners get what they need when and where they need it is a critical part of personalization. This requires a mindset change from the technology available driving the experience to the experience driving what technology gets used.

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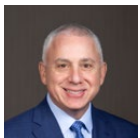
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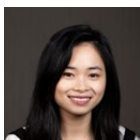
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About Brandon Hall Group

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