



Six trends that define e-learning in 2022



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Executive Summary

This eBook identifies six trends that impact the learning and development landscape in 2022 and beyond. These trends have been identified through analyzing our own research data and combining it with existing research. Besides identifying trends, this eBook also provides recommendations on how to react to them by suggesting a coherent learning strategy.

There's a growing need to create content quickly. We can accelerate the content creation process using a learning solution based on reusable templates and content. This also ensures a lower learning curve for creating e-learning content.

Simplifying the creation process this way enables employees to create their own learning content – an approach known as Employee-generated Learning (EGL). It empowers any employee within an organization to create e-learning courses on topics in which they are an expert. It's cost-effective and allows for easy localization. We have also found that mobile learning has become indispensable.

Mobile devices can be used to supply small nuggets of learning content through a method known as microlearning.

Finally, we have seen the demand for traditional Learning Management Systems (LMS) evolve, with a growing awareness of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted learners.

In response, we recommend opting for a responsive and cloud-based tool. More importantly, the tool should allow instant knowledge sharing and facilitate the creation of learning paths that provide e-learning nuggets. Combining such a tool with a cohesive learning strategy that encompasses the trends described above would help optimize learning processes in any organization.

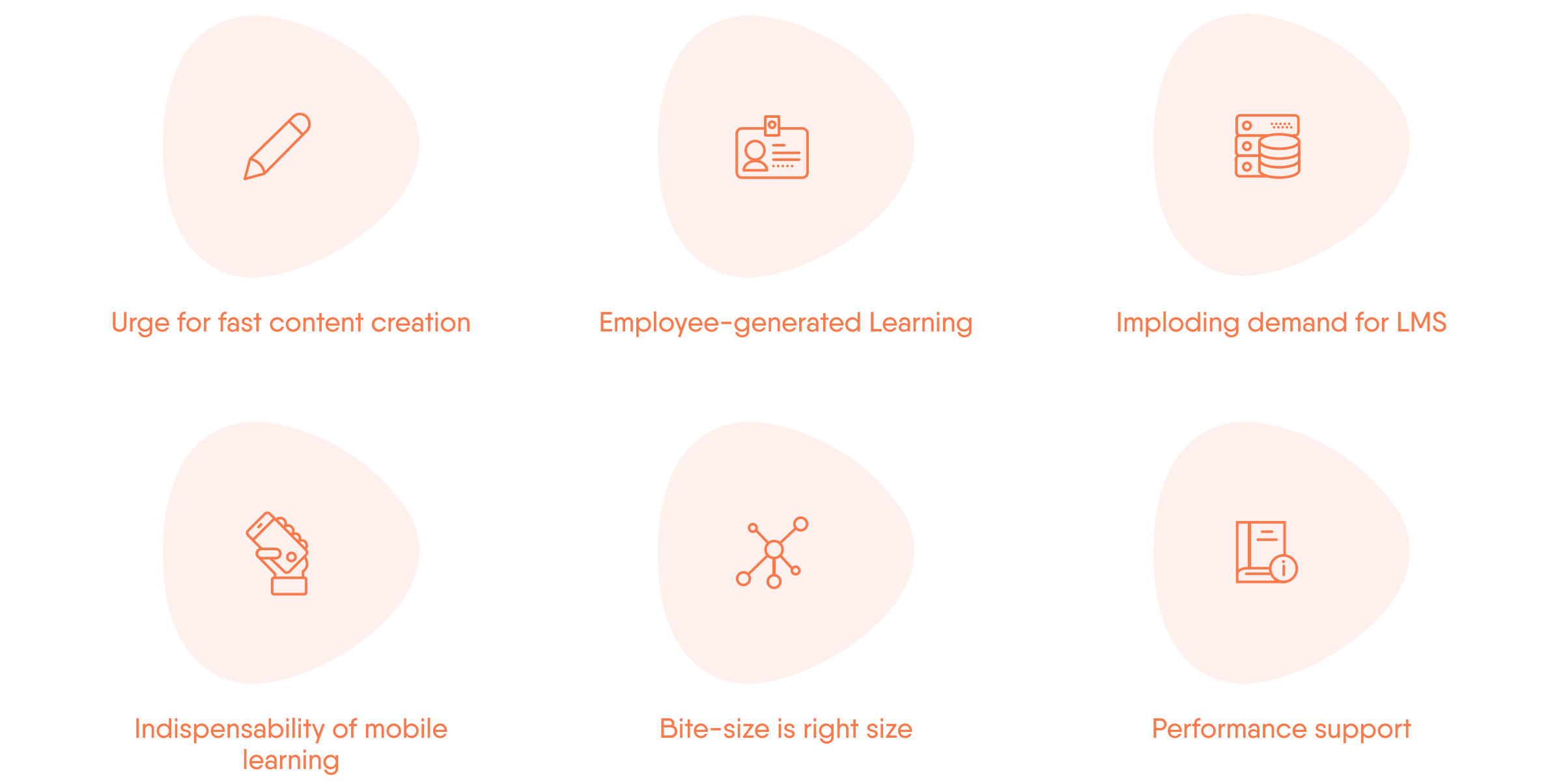
Introduction & Methodology

The field of Learning and Development (L&D) is constantly changing. New innovations arise, different methods come into play, and trends from the past often prove ineffective in the longer term. Most existing content on (online) learning-related topics is based on limited information. Besides this lack of comprehensive information, the market is also changing rapidly. These factors make it difficult to keep up with all that’s happening. In contrast to many articles and papers on e-learning and L&D, the current paper bases its findings on primary research. Its purpose is to provide insight into the significant trends and changes facing the L&D field today. Yet, in addition to this descriptive function, the paper also provides recommendations and practical solutions on integrating these insights into your own organization's L&D strategy.

A quantitative study was carried out for the purpose of this report. This study used a large-scale survey with a sample size of nearly 600 learning managers, learning directors, instructional designers, and trainers working for multinational companies. To corroborate our findings, we integrated a body of existing research with our own results.

Six prominent trends

The following sections analyze the most important trends we identified and examine their implications for the L&D community. Each section contains a concise recommendation related to the trend discussed. The final section, “the way ahead,” compiles these recommendations to form a clearly defined learning strategy.



Section 1

Urge for fast content creation

Until quite recently, instructional designers were accustomed to working with labor-intensive tools to create e-learning content. Content had to be created from scratch and instructional designers were the only ones equipped for the job. Creating an online course was a daunting, tedious process. As a result, costs were high and turnaround times were lengthy. Because of the long creation process, content often went outdated before it was even released. To make matters worse, learning to use these complex e-learning tools was also time-consuming.

Fortunately, things have changed significantly. In recent years, instructional designers have taken on a new role. Instead of creating content-heavy courses for others, they now focus on facilitating instant knowledge-sharing.

Today, user-friendly e-learning tools are readily available, which has significantly changed L&D processes. E-learning content no longer needs to be created from scratch using clunky, outdated tools. Not only are there many easy-to-use tools but also those that come with built-in, reusable templates. These features significantly accelerate the e-learning creation process.

During our quantitative study, we asked instructional designers and (training) managers about content-creation methods. As shown in Figure 1, instructional designers still prefer the method of creating content from scratch. Managers and directors, on the other hand, increasingly see a need for templates and reusable content since this directly decreases the time to market.

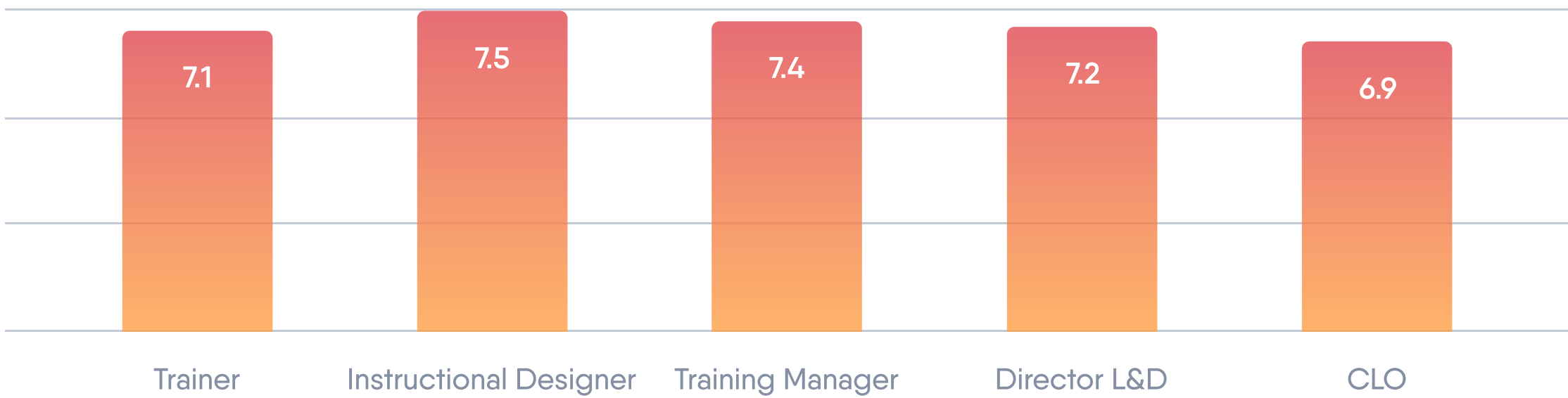


Fig.1. Importance creating content from scratch

From a business perspective, e-learning must be cost-effective while still serving its purpose. Not every e-learning course needs to be a tailor-made work of art. An efficient method for achieving fast, cost-effective learning is reusing content and templates. The content can still be customized but the design process becomes far less time-consuming. According to Pappas (2015), ready-made and customizable e-learning templates significantly improve your productivity and enhance the overall quality of your e-learning courses. With this approach, virtually any learning goal can be achieved without having to build content one pixel at a time. In most cases, pixel-perfect design isn't even relevant. We recommend rethinking and moving away from this perfectionist design mentality.

Employee-generated Learning

As the threshold for e-learning creation disappears, a wide range of opportunities present itself. Today, anyone can share knowledge instantly, efficiently, and inexpensively. The widest-reaching implication is that the content creation shifts from people who specialize in e-learning design to people who simply have knowledge to share.

Any employee within an organization can now create e-learning courses about topics in which they’re an expert. We refer to this type of learning as Employee-generated Learning (EGL). Our data revealed that Chief Learning Officers (CLO) – who are seen as ambassadors for change in an organization – already view EGL as a vital learning method (see Figure 2).Any employee within an organization can now create e-learning courses about topics in which they’re an expert. We refer to this type of learning as Employee-generated Learning (EGL). Our data revealed that Chief Learning Officers (CLO) – who are seen as ambassadors for change in an organization – already view EGL as a vital learning method (see Figure 2).



Fig.2. Importance Employee-generated Learning

Since CLOs recognize the importance of Employee-generated Learning, this trend is likely to spread to other parts of organizations. Enabling employees to create learning content allows them to instantly share knowledge with their peers.

Moreover, there is significant dissatisfaction with traditionally created learning content in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. In these regions, content is usually created by Western learning developers and simply translated rather than localized. This leads to a disconnect between the content and the learner. The user experience and design also target Western learning preferences and therefore do not always resonate in other regions (Adkins, 2017).

Empowering employees worldwide to create and adapt their own learning content is a simple, cost-effective solution to this problem. Employee-generated Learning therefore allows for truly localized content that transcends culture and language barriers by putting the content creation process in the hands of employees.

Furthermore, the evolving role of e-learning platforms and growing need for instant knowledge-sharing are highly compatible with Employee-generated Learning programs.

Section 3

The imploding demand for the LMS

The worldwide demand for Learning Management Systems (LMSs) notably decreased by 14.6% in 2016. Back then, L&D market research firm Ambient Insight (2016) had predicted that global LMS revenues will drop from the current US\$7.1 billion to US\$3.2 billion by 2021. But these numbers didn't account for the COVID-19 pandemic. And since then, the numbers changed.

With a global shift to remote work in 2020, online learning overtook traditional face-to-face learning approaches, paving the way for LMSs to regain popularity. In fact, the global LMS market is projected to grow from US\$13.38 billion in 2021 to US\$44.49 billion in 2028, at a CAGR of 18.7% in forecast period (Fortune Business Insights, 2020).

Several other digital learning tools have grown increasingly popular as well, leading to increased competition for the LMS.

Cloud-based, software-as-a-service (SaaS) tools easily allow organizations to transition from one system to another. Cloud-based data also makes it easy to export anytime. Moreover, these services also usually come with flexible licenses or subscriptions.

Learning Experience Platforms (LXP) are also rising in demand. In the L&D world, these platforms are often compared to LMSs as the “Netflix of learning.” This is because LXPs, by design, empower learners to seek out and choose what learning events to participate in on their own, much like an online streaming service allows viewers to play any programs they wish. An LMS, on the other hand, pushes out pre-determined content according to a set syllabus, much like a traditional broadcast network decides what programs viewers will watch and when.

The benefit of an LXP, however, is that it encourages learners to take responsibility for their own learning needs and pursue a more personalized experience.

As a result, we’re witnessing a new dynamic in the L&D world in which buyers can shop around for the right tool without getting locked in.

Instant knowledge-sharing is becoming the norm. Traditional LMSs come with slower processes that aren’t conducive for today’s digital audiences. That said, though the demand for LMSs is declining, it isn’t disappearing. We predict that the role of LMSs will evolve to specifically cater to formal training services, like general onboarding or compliance training. These more complex forms of e-learning design will also continue to require the skills of instructional designers.

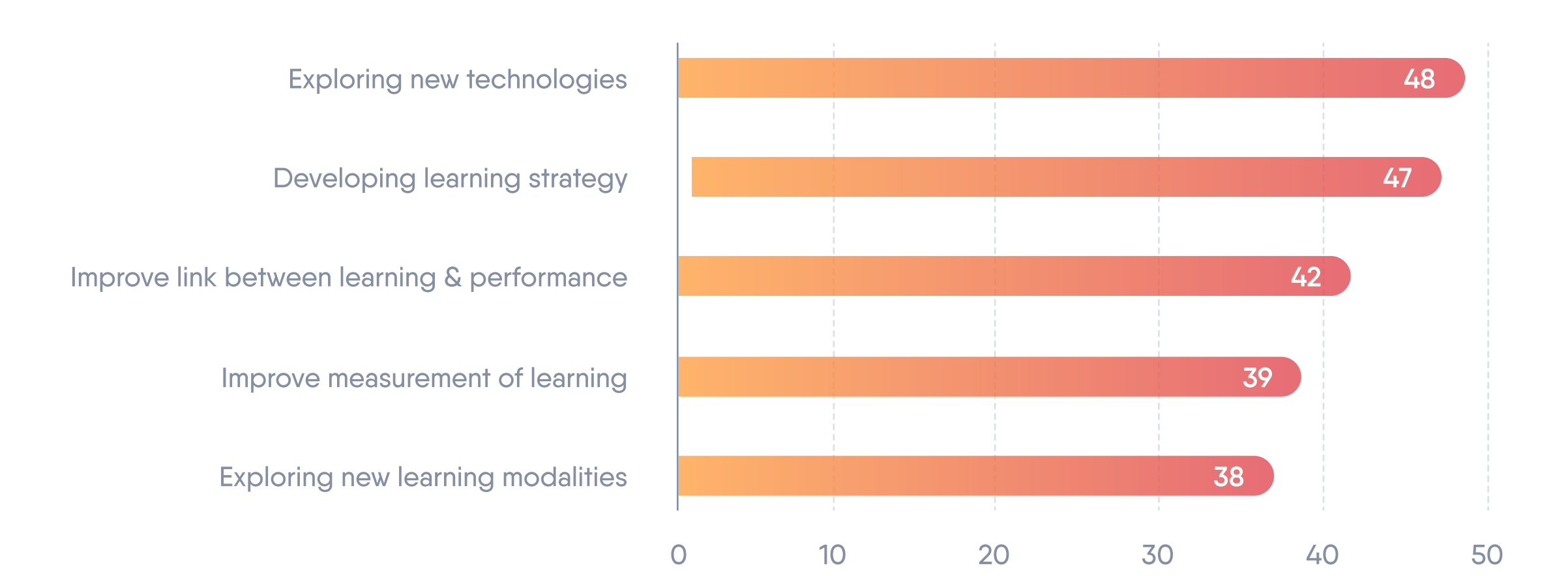


Fig.3. L&D Priority Ratings in percentages (n=302)

Section 4

Mobile learning becomes indispensable

Companies turn away from traditional LMSs partly due to the growing demand for fully responsive solutions. The ubiquity of mobile devices permanently connected to 4G networks in the global market must be taken into consideration.

Considering the significance of mobile devices in everyday life, it makes sense that these devices should also play a principal role in L&D. Recently, the trend toward mobile learning has skyrocketed in many regions.

A region that clearly demonstrates this trend is China. An immense 70% of the L&D revenue in China can be derived from mobile learning technologies and apps (Adkins, 2016).

In first-world countries, it's common for people to own a mobile device as well as a desktop. In developing countries, however, mobile devices play a far greater role. Here, it's more common to rely solely on smartphones and many don't own a desktop computer. The result is a leapfrog effect, in which e-learning in these countries bypasses desktops and occurs almost exclusively through mobile screens. This has led to a boom in the global demand for mobile learning solutions. The decline in revenues from traditional LMSs is also closely related to this shift (Adkins, 2016). Mobile learning isn't a "nice-to-have" but a "must-have"; it's become indispensable and is increasingly the primary source of learning. This shift in focus toward mobile learning will continue to dominate the L&D industry.

Section 5

Bite-size is the right size

Mobile learning has given rise to the effective use of small learning "nuggets" as opposed to traditional, full-length courses. These small units of information cater to modern learners whom Avery (2016) characterizes as overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient. The solution, in Avery's view, is to "create high quality and valuable microlearning content." He advocates dividing learning segments into short sessions (shorter than 15 minutes).

Microlearning refers to the method of imparting information using short, easily digestible, focused learning units. Ideally, it shouldn't take longer than six minutes to consume microlearning content. Mobile devices are highly suited for facilitating this type of quick and focused learning.

Condensing content into bite-size pieces makes e-learning more effective. Tools that use this method to condition the brain have been found to significantly improve memory, attention, linguistic skills, planning skills and even problem-solving skills (Adkins, 2017). Therefore, when opting for an e-learning solution, full (mobile) responsiveness should be a key criterion. Additionally, the solution should include options for providing microlearning via mobile devices.

Section 6

Performance support

While completing multiple, in-depth learning events can set employees up for success in their roles, it isn't always the best solution. Today's employees are facing growing backlogs and, subsequently, busier schedules. Though they continue to experience learning needs on the job, they aren't always looking for a full learning module to answer their questions.

Instead, today's busy employees are far more likely to benefit from performance support resources: educational aids that enable on-the-job learning. These types of resources are ideal for a situation where an employee might find themselves stuck on the job and in need of quick access to specific information to carry on with their task.

Because of their need to meet learning needs quickly, performance support resources usually come in the form of a step-by-step guide, checklist, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), or even curated lists, making them easy to scan and consume while on the job. They are best suited for explaining processes or specific tasks.

The way ahead

This paper has examined six L&D trends and their consequences for 2022 and beyond. These trends are by no means isolated from one another. Rather, they're deeply interconnected and should be considered in unison to form a coherent L&D strategy.

The growing need for rapid content creation can be addressed by choosing a learning solution that facilitates reusable templates and content. The ability to re-use content simplifies the content creation process, which, in return, helps to empower employees to generate their own learning content.

This method of Employee-generated Learning is cost effective and enables content to be localized for diverse learning communities in a simple, organic manner. Ideally, this content should be supplied to learners in the form of microlearning via mobile devices. Our research reveals that traditional Learning Management Systems are less effective for facilitating fast-paced, employee-generated, mobile learning strategies.

Implementing an effective L&D strategy that accounts for these circumstances may appear challenging. However, there are various cloud-based authoring tools with a low learning curve that fit these trends.

When opting for a solution, make sure it allows for instant knowledge-sharing and facilitates learning paths that provide e-learning nuggets. Using the right tools ensures an effective and future-proof e-learning program.

The success story of how the multinational, Nielsen, has implemented a companywide learning strategy as described above can be found in this short case description. For more information on our research and access to our full research results, please reach out to k.spiro@easygenerator.com. We are more than happy to share our results with you.

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About the author



Kasper Spiro is the CEO of Easygenerator and a recognized thought leader in the world of e-Learning. With over 30 years of experience, he is a frequently requested keynote speaker and well renowned blogger within the e-learning community.

Email: k.spiro@easygenerator.com

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/kasperspiro/>

Blog: <https://kasperspiro.com/>