emergn

The Pursuit of Effective Workplace Training

Emergn Survey Report

Welcome to the 2022 Emergn Survey Report: The Pursuit of Effective Workplace Training. The business world has undergone significant challenges over the last few years. However, these challenges have introduced new insights into our current working models and shed a brighter light on organizational vulnerabilities and opportunities to improve the way we work – none more so than with workplace training.

The introduction of new business models has increased flexibility and accessibility, giving employees the ability to access operations from anywhere at any time. And, while this has provided employees with a better work/life balance – e.g., remote work, 4-day work weeks and unlimited paid time off (PTO) – employers along every industry are beginning to think more strategically about their learning and development (L&D) programs. Where it was once thought of as a nice to have, today, workplace training programs have become essential to not only improve operational performance and a company's bottom line but also to improve job satisfaction and employee morale. That said, to successfully implement L&D that caters to all parties, businesses must tap into the minds of both the leaders and learners of organizations.

To gain a better understanding of current workplace training offerings, the disconnect between leadership and employees and the steps being taken to align workforce learning with digital transformation processes, Emergn, a global digital business services firm helping companies deliver valuable digital products and customer experiences faster, conducted a survey of more than 1,200 professionals from the United States and the United Kingdom. The survey, conducted in July 2022, focused on the opinions of learners, those at the management level or below, and leaders – specifically IT directors and HR leaders with the responsibility of overseeing workplace training.

Read on to learn more about the benefits and trends of today's workplace training programs, as well as what is needed to improve learning programs.

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Key takeaways

Workplace training is a strong retention tool

of learners stated that L&D programs increased job satisfaction and employee morale

of learners said that strong workplace training would have a very high or high impact on their decision to stay with an employer

Workplace training today is a powerful tool to recruit and retain top talent in an organization. 55% of learners stated that L&D programs increased job satisfaction and employee morale. Additionally, 75% said that strong workplace training would have a very high or high impact on their decision to stay with an employer rather than seek other opportunities.

The disconnect between learners and leaders

of leaders found workplace training programs to be very effective

of learners felt current workplace training models were very effective

Both learners and leaders agree that workplace training programs can be improved. Only 23% of learners and 22% of leaders viewed their organization's current workplace training as extremely effective. However, when it comes to realizing the advantages of workplace training, leaders are more prone to recognize its benefits – with 59% of leaders finding workplace training programs to be very effective, while only 50% of learners felt the same about current workplace training models. The two also disagreed over which trainings are more important, with leaders favoring management training offerings over learners' desires to learn communication and presentation skills.

Connecting employee and employer ROI to L&D

of respondents felt they either didn't have enough time or that current L&D was not relevant to their role

of leaders stated their workplace training was completely connected to the goals of their team

Current workplace training programs fail to catch on with employees due to a lack of availability, with 65% of respondents feeling they either don't have enough time or that current L&D is not relevant to their role. And, HR leaders are struggling to showcase the results of workplace training to prove its benefits to employers. The current ways of measuring training success are based mostly on management's perspective and self-reported progress (i.e., employee surveys). These current measurements do not accurately identify the return on investment (ROI) or even determine if training programs align with overall goals – with only 35% of leaders stating their workplace training was completely connected to the goals of their team.

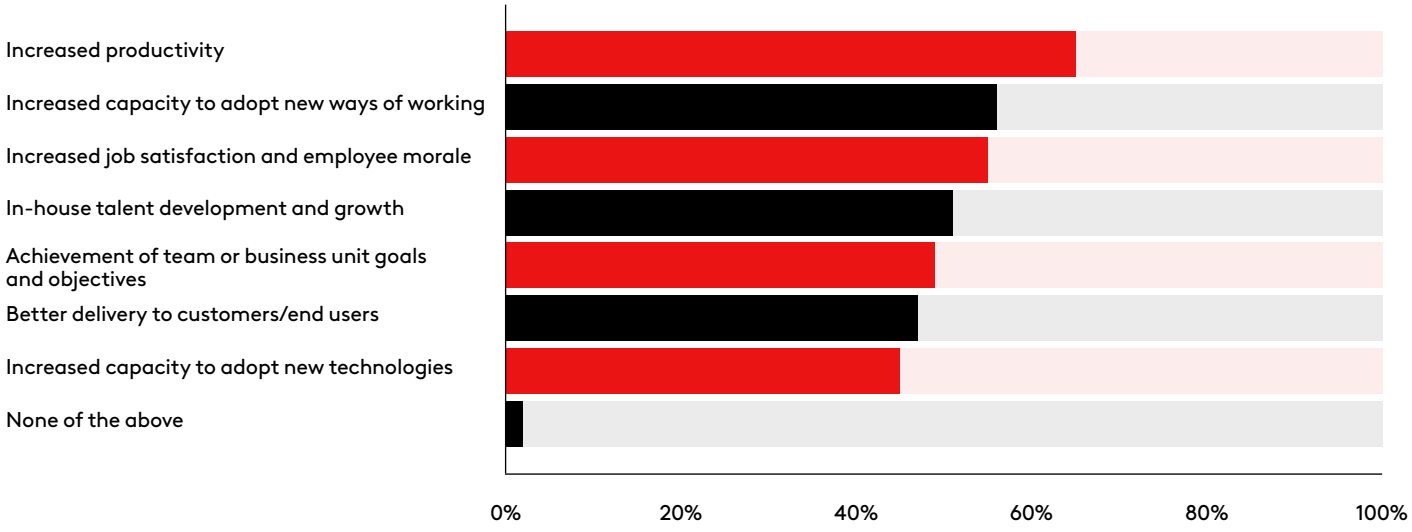
The importance of workplace training

Following the Great Resignation, where many individuals left their current jobs in search of more fulfilling and purposeful roles, employees have made clear that a lack of continued learning offerings by an employer is a deal breaker. This realization has made L&D programs a necessity and powerful tool to entice and retain talent, with 55% of respondents citing an increase in job satisfaction and employee morale as a result of workplace training. Additionally, 75% of learners stated that strong workplace training would have a very high or high impact on their decision to stay with an employer rather than seek other opportunities.

Of course, the importance of workplace training has long been understood. For years, business-specific learning programs have helped employers and employees uncover and address weaknesses, improve skillsets, implement new skills in a controlled and monitored environment and enhance employee performance and satisfaction. The sentiment surrounding workplace training has not changed, with leaders and learners agreeing that effective workplace training programs yield many of the same significant benefits for business outcomes.

FIGURE 1

Which of the following benefits, if any, have you observed from workplace training at your organization?
(All respondents – select all that apply)



75%

OF LEARNERS STATED THAT STRONG WORKPLACE TRAINING WOULD HAVE A VERY HIGH OR HIGH IMPACT ON THEIR DECISION TO STAY WITH AN EMPLOYER RATHER THAN SEEK OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

The benefits of workplace training respondents observed the most:

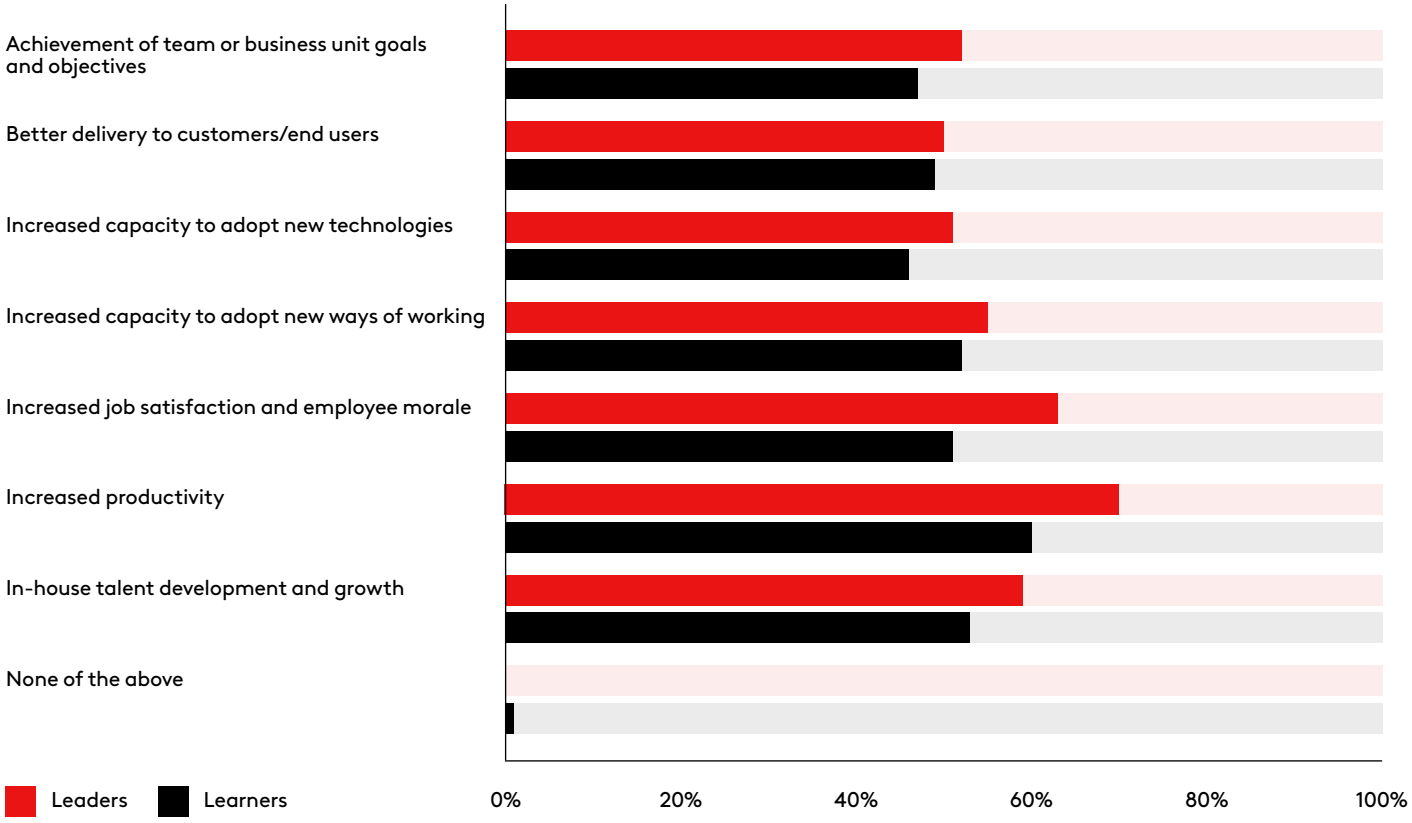
- **Increased productivity (65%)**
- **Increased capacity to adopt new ways of working (56%)**
- **Increased job satisfaction and employee morale (55%)**

Balancing the focus of workplace training

However, data suggests that current workplace training programs benefit leaders more so than learners. Leaders were more prone to recognizing improvement in productivity (70%) compared to learners (60%) and in their ability to adopt new technologies (51%) – compared to (46%) of learners. Even more glaring, observations of increased job satisfaction and employee morale were significantly higher in leaders (63%) than learners (51%).

FIGURE 2

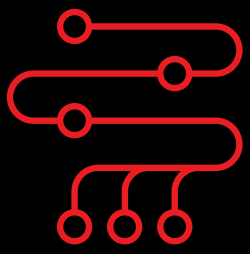
Which of the following benefits, if any, have you observed from workplace training at your organization?
(Leader and learner side-by-side comparison – select all that apply)



60%

ONLY 60% OF LEARNERS OBSERVED AN INCREASE IN PRODUCTIVITY COMPARED TO 70% OF LEADERS

Some may argue these numbers reflect a leader's encompassing overview of operations; however, if an overarching objective of learning initiatives is to improve the employee experience, current workplace training is not meeting that goal. While the sentiment surrounding the importance of workplace training has not changed, businesses' approaches to providing inclusive and effective training that caters to all members of an organization must improve in order to make workplace training more engaging and worthwhile.



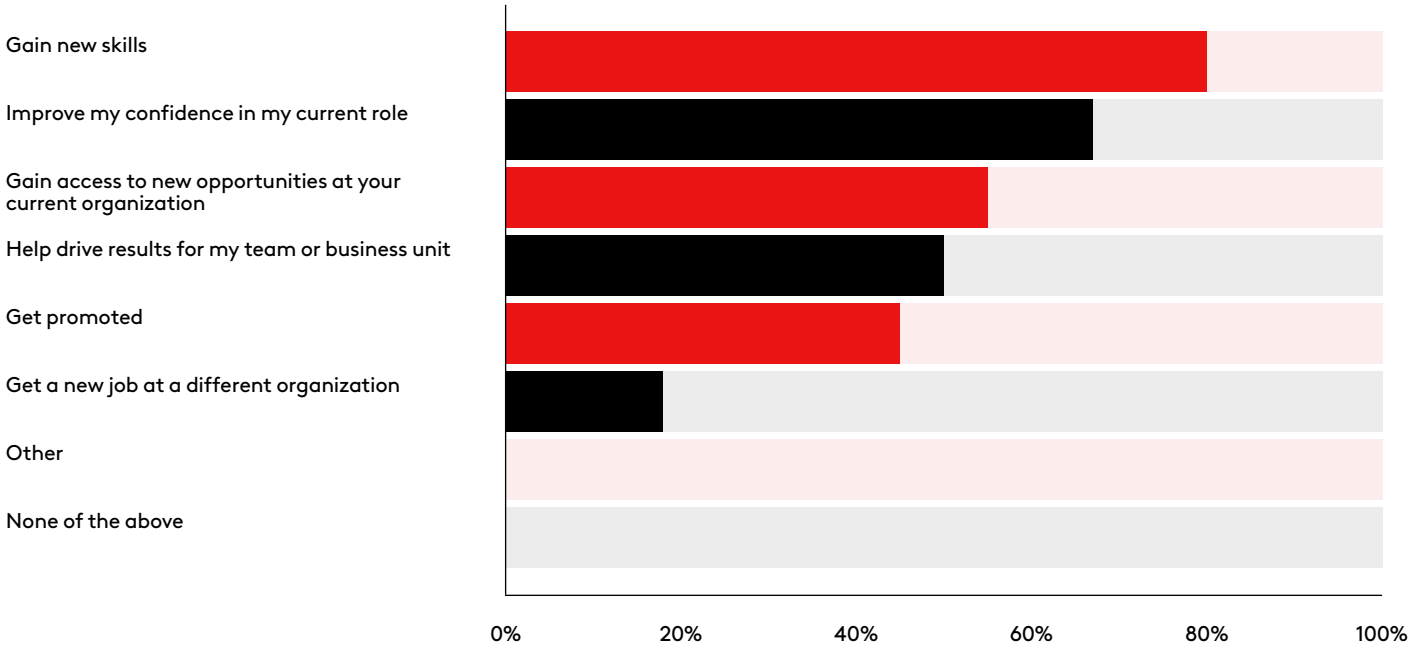
"Developing pragmatic work-based training solutions that met our unique needs, resulted in our employees experiencing a very relevant, high-quality and engaging learning journey that produced a real mindset shift."

Clair Marr, Head of Capability & Resourcing, Sainbury's Bank
on increasing workplace engagement through inclusive offerings

When asked what learners would like to achieve when participating in workplace training, the majority of respondents noted the desire to gain new skills (80%), improve their confidence in their current role (67%) and gain access to new opportunities at their current organization (55%). Not only do learners want to utilize workplace training to expand their skill set, but also to hone their expertise within their current roles and to expand their opportunities within their current company.

FIGURE 3

When participating in workplace training, which of the following do you want to achieve?
(Learner responses only – select all that apply)



It is evident that workplace training is an instrumental tool for employers to retain and attract top talent over competitors. However, it is also clear that there is a significant difference between workplace training and effective workplace training. Employers looking to be more strategic with training offerings must design programs that get employees excited – and consider training as more than just a "part of the job."

It is evident that workplace training is an instrumental tool for employers to retain and attract top talent over competitors.

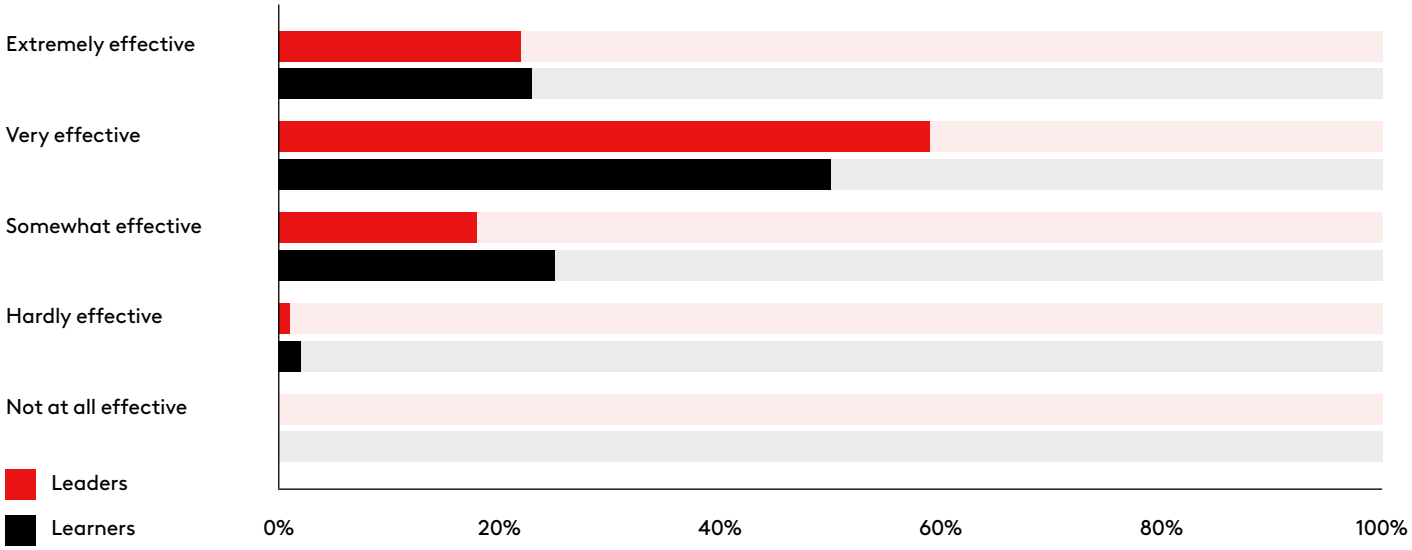
A difference in opinion

Making the benefits of workplace training more recognizable to employees can be as simple as asking for input. While the high-level benefits of workplace training are easy to agree upon, there are several differences in opinions between leaders and learners regarding the effectiveness of current workplace training programs and what training would be most beneficial.

Both groups believe there is room for improvement in the effectiveness of their organization's workplace training programs to provide the skills needed to meet the goals and objectives of a company – only 23% of learners and 22% of leaders say workplace training at their organization is extremely effective. However, a greater percentage of leaders would describe current workplace training programs as very effective (59%) compared to learners (50%), further cementing the disconnect between leadership and their staff.

FIGURE 4

How effective is your workplace training at your organization when it comes to providing the skills you need to meet the goals and objectives of your team?
(Leader and learner side-by-side comparison)



There is also disagreement among the two on which types of workplace training would best improve work outcomes moving forward. While it is clear that both view industry-specific and technology-specific skills as essential, learners feel training around effective communication and presentation skills are just as important (49%), while many leaders feel training on managing people is paramount (45%).

49%

OF LEARNERS FEEL TRAINING AROUND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND PRESENTATION SKILLS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC AND TECHNOLOGY-SPECIFIC SKILLS

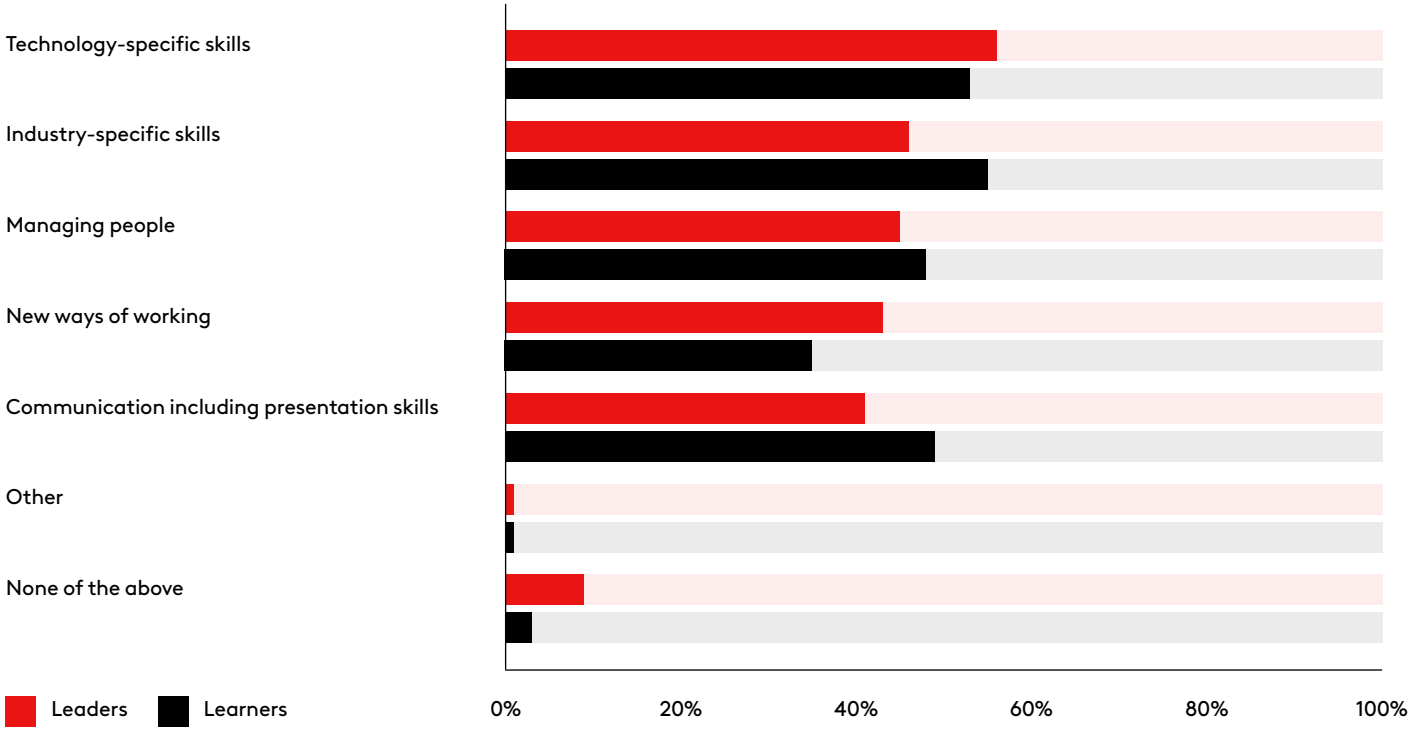
45%

OF LEADERS FELT TRAINING FOCUSED ON MANAGING PEOPLE WAS PARAMOUNT

> “Our managers/leaders need training on how to be more effective in their roles: how to deliver constructive feedback, how to write performance appraisals, how to better onboard hires, etc.”
>
> **Survey Respondent (Leader)**

FIGURE 5

What kind of workplace training would improve the outcomes of your work?
(All respondents – select all that apply)



While the desire for continued growth through L&D is there, leaders and learners are at different stages of their professional development. Workplace training must be designed with a more singular view of the individual – one-size-fits-all L&D programs are out of touch with today’s complex business models.

Workplace training programs should be structured with the understanding that employees don’t just want to learn how to do their jobs better; they want opportunities to grow beyond their current roles.

Managers want to learn skills that will have them knocking on the door of the C-level suites, and employees want to learn how to lead like the management above them. By giving employees a voice and listening to their strengths, weaknesses and future aspirations, and providing personalized and effective training that aligns those wants with business outcomes, businesses have the opportunity to improve employee buy-in, increase productivity and avoid losing top talent to their competitors.

"We need to carefully balance individual capability growth while ensuring that the workplace training provided aligns to the needs of the business goals."

Steven Angelo-Eadie
Head of Learning Services, Emergn

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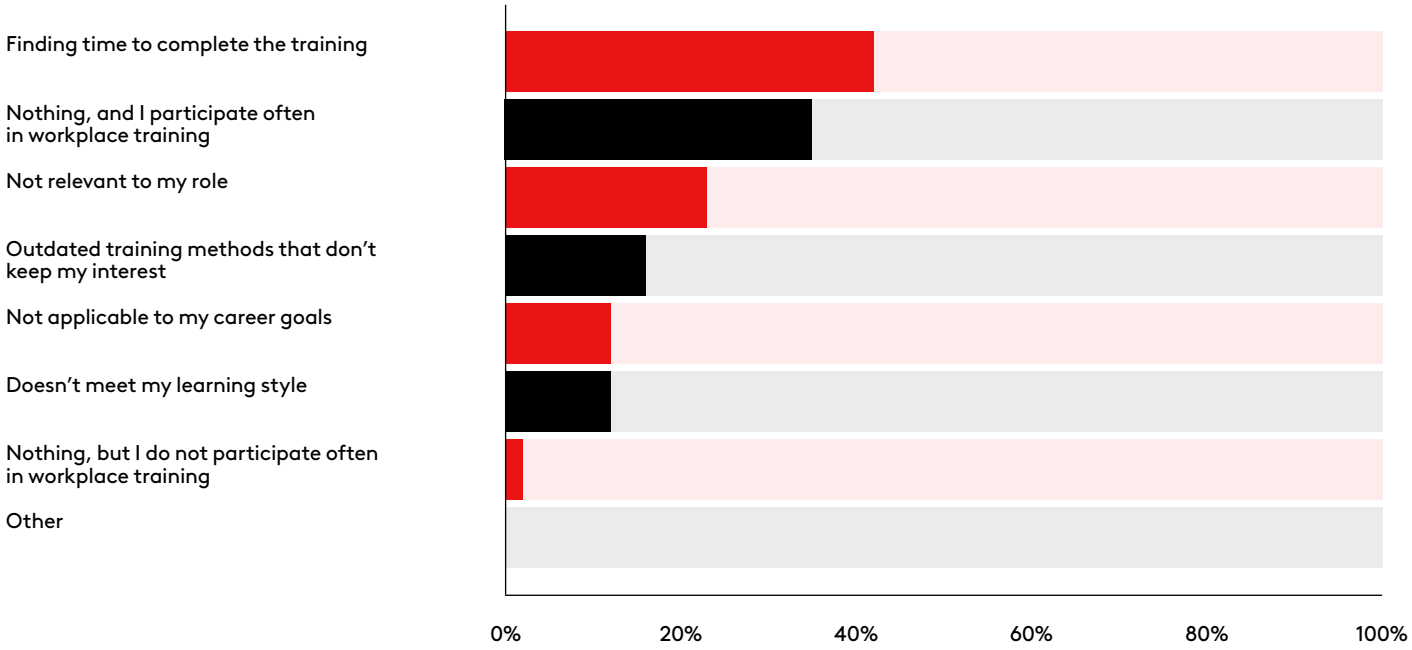
Making workplace training more accessible **and** relevant

While leaders and learners might not always agree on which types of workplace training are most important, both agree there is a glaring need to make workplace training more accessible and relevant to an employee's role. When asked to select all the barriers hindering employees from participating in workplace training, only 35% of respondents said nothing was hindering them from participating. In comparison, a staggering number of respondents noted significant – but fixable – barriers getting in their way.

FIGURE 6

What hinders you from participating in workplace training offered by your organization?
(All respondents – select all that apply)



Respondents felt they either could not find the time to complete the training (42%), the training was not relevant to their role (23%) or the training methods were outdated (16%).

HR leaders are well aware of employees' struggles when it comes to workplace training accessibility, citing it as the most pressing challenge to effective workplace training (56%), followed by budgetary constraints (46%) and finding the right mix of online and in-person training (43%).

42%

OF RESPONDENTS ARE HINDERED FROM COMPLETING TRAINING OFFERED BY THEIR ORGANIZATION DUE TO A LACK OF TIME

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Online training opens the door to a wealth of possibilities and a potential solution to the lack of accessibility to workplace training – allowing employees the freedom to train from anywhere at any time. However, remote work has raised many red flags about employees' ability to stay connected to their company and work. While countless organizations have implemented virtual happy hours or employee "check-ins" in hopes of facilitating relationship building and employee engagement, effective workplace training can be another tool to break through employee disconnect. By implementing engaging and role-specific training that provides solutions to current work problems, employers can remind employees of the importance of their work and the benefits of workplace training to personal and company success.

> **"The activities helped me to relate the training to the challenges we face day-to-day in our work."**
>
> **Gayathri Balyam, Engineering Manager, Tesco**
> on the success of effective, role-specific workplace training

Also, HR leaders have struggled to connect ROI to workplace training programs. This explains HR leaders growing concerns over budgetary constraints and highlights the need to quantify the success of workplace training. According to reports, L&D teams run into several barriers when proving the impact of workplace training – the most notable being the prioritization of other business objectives. One way to solve the lack of prioritization and highlight the positive return of workplace training is to align training with business objectives – and make it a point to showcase the impact of goal-oriented training on business outcomes to leadership.

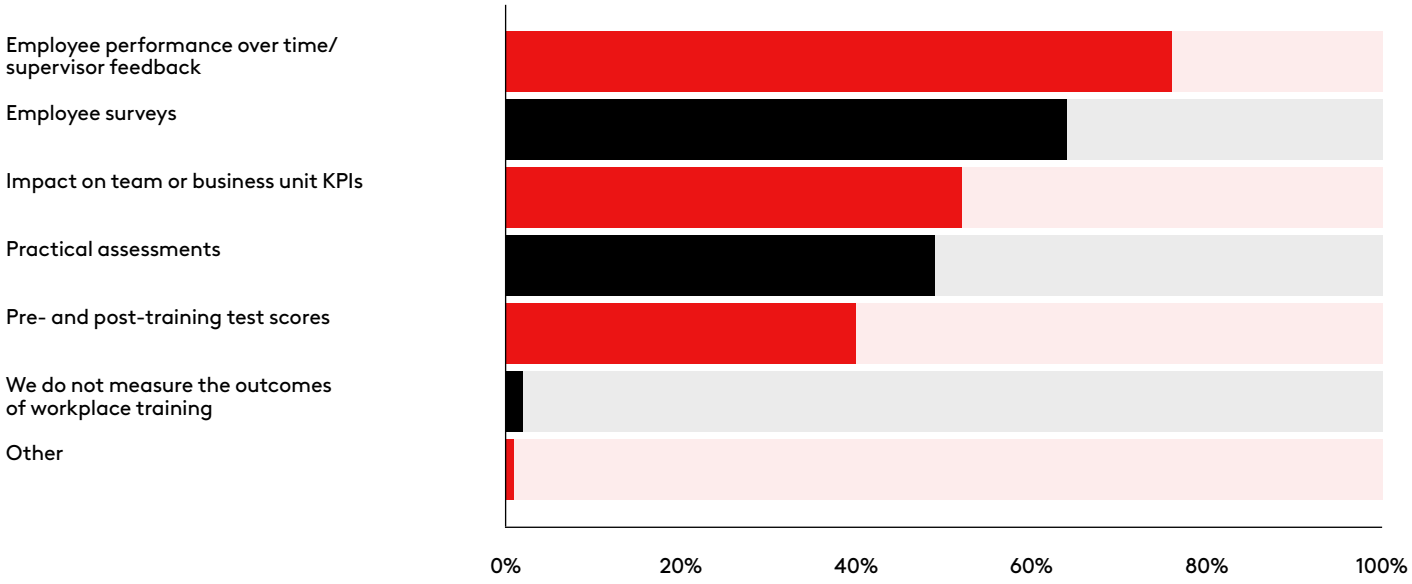
By offering job-specific training that shows the connection between employee, team and organizational goals and baking it into an employee's schedule, business leaders can provide training that helps employees improve in their current roles. Simultaneously, this training can serve as a reminder of the importance of an employee's work and how it aligns with their team and overall business goals.

Leadership measurement and planning

As employers continue to improve the accessibility and offerings of their workplace training, they must also re-evaluate how they measure the success of their internal training programs. When leaders were asked how they currently measured the success of workplace training, the majority of respondents listed employee performance over time/supervisor feedback (76%), employee surveys (64%) and the impact on team or business KPIs (52%).

FIGURE 7

How does your organization measure the outcomes of workplace training?
(Leader responses only – select all that apply)



As we have noted, there is a disconnect between leaders and learners regarding the effectiveness of current workplace training. And, with the push for businesses to be more strategic with their L&D offerings to retain and entice new talent, an overreaction to business productivity in measuring training success will not properly track employee satisfaction and ability to grow. While surveys can be one way to gauge employee satisfaction, studies show that many employees may be less transparent on employer pulse surveys to avoid company backlash.

What are employers to do? One solution is to set clear and attainable goals directly connected to an employee's or team's current training. For example, say a business is implementing training on a new product automation software to improve a team's ability to push a product to market. Instead of focusing on measuring just the number of people trained, setting a clear, measurable goal, i.e., why it is crucial to get to market sooner, will strengthen the understanding of the problem and the need for the training. By setting attainable, training-specific goals, business leaders can properly assess training success while easily exposing and celebrating the benefits of the training for their employees.

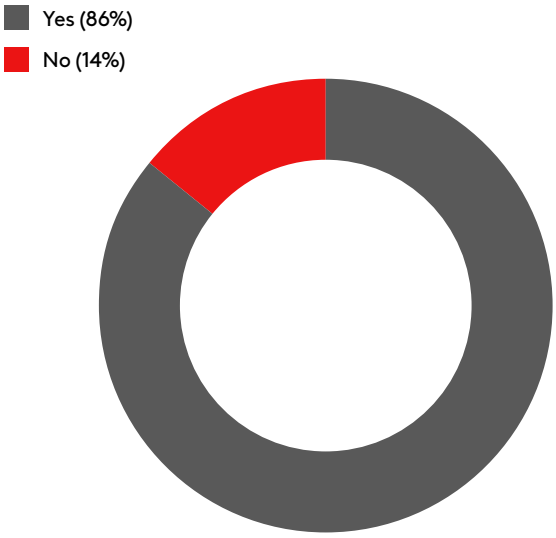
As businesses continue to define their hybrid and remote business models that require some or total operational transformations, leaders have had to consider how these new models will affect how their employees work and learn. While leaders feel they have a strong understanding of their workforce's current skills and capabilities moving forward, there is still room for improvement as 12% of leaders stated they only understood the skills and capabilities needed for their workforce to help deliver on team goals only "somewhat"or "not very well" at all.

This includes the adjustments businesses are making to align workplace training with digital transformation efforts. 14% of leaders say they do not have a workforce training plan that focuses on developing skills their team needs in line with the organization's transformation plans. Inadequate training can leave teams unprepared and frustrated during transformation, which could lead some employees to move on from the company. This also leaves businesses vulnerable to a decline in productivity due to slower operational and technology adoption times.

> " We need a more mobile workforce that is more proficient in digital technology and can handle the digital transformation. "
>
> **Survey Respondent (Leader)**

FIGURE 8

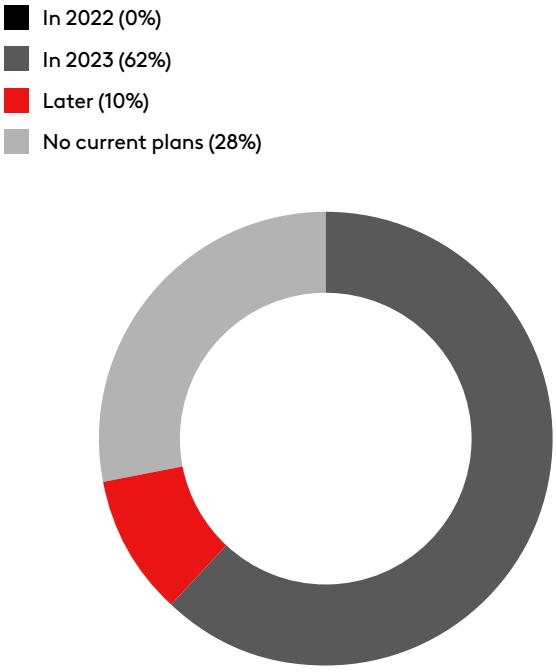
Do you have a workforce training plan that focuses on developing the skills your team needs in line with your organization's transformation plan?
(Leader responses only)



Fortunately, most leaders (62%) plan to introduce a workforce training plan that focuses on developing the skills of their team and needs in line with their organization's transformation plan in the year ahead.

FIGURE 9

How soon, if at all, will you introduce such a workforce training plan?
(Leader responses only)



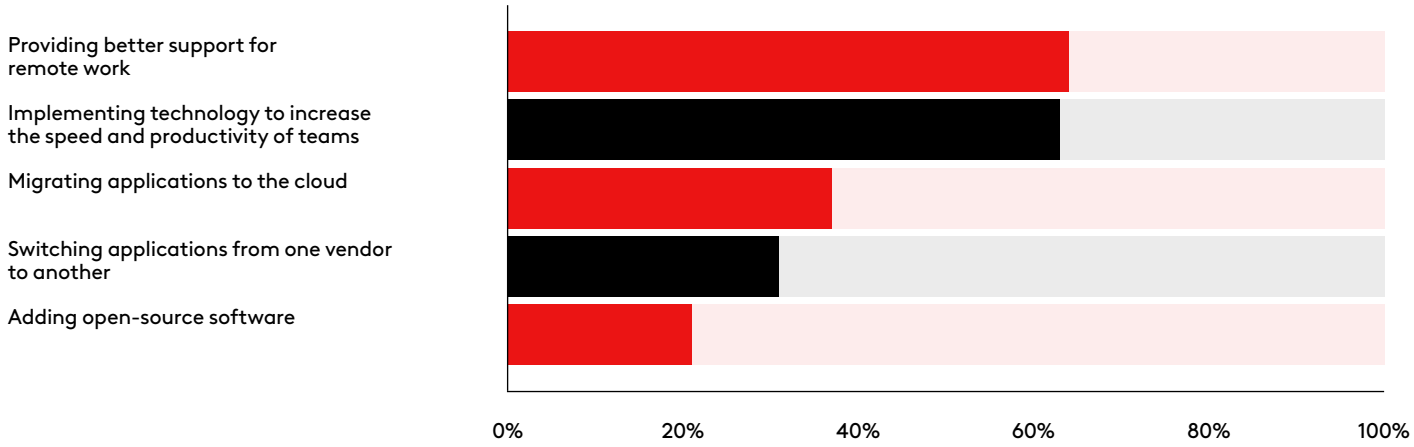
Taking an IT initiative

As more and more businesses introduce transformation plans and make a move to new business models and the adoption of remote and hybrid working, the IT initiatives of many organizations have changed. When asked which IT initiatives their organization were implementing, nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents listed providing better support for remote work.

While making business operations more accessible through remote work was a top priority for many participants' companies, nearly the same number of respondents (63%) noted the implementation of technology to increase the speed and productivity of teams to be a top IT priority for their businesses, and another 37% of respondents cited migrating applications to the cloud.

FIGURE 10

Which, if any, of the following IT initiatives is your organization implementing?
(All respondents – select all that apply)



When asked what kind of workplace training would improve the outcomes delivered in their roles, more than half of the respondents that worked within the software industry (52%) stated new ways of working, which was significantly higher than all other respondents.

52%

OF RESPONDENTS WITHIN THE SOFTWARE INDUSTRY BELIEVE WORKPLACE TRAINING FOCUSED ON UNDERSTANDING NEW WAYS OF WORKING WOULD IMPROVE THE OUTCOMES DELIVERED IN THEIR ROLE THE MOST

Accessibility and performance are high priorities during IT initiatives. However, the implementation of innovative software to improve operational visibility and increase productivity should come second to implementing technology-specific training programs that align with a business's transformation efforts.

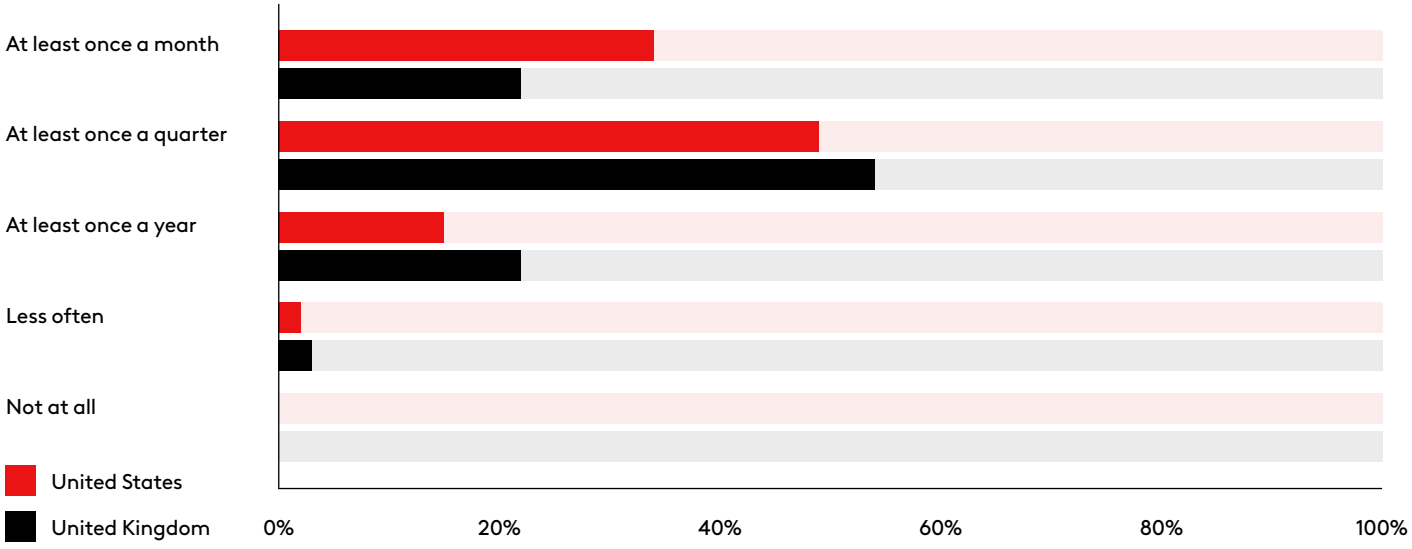
Often, an organization's transformation efforts fail because they are not thinking big picture. In reality, especially today's reality, transformation is continuous. Businesses must align and treat operations, training and transformation as an ongoing lifecycle that demands tiny, incremental change, day by day. Organizations that fail to find room for continual technology training in their budget and align it with ongoing operational transformation will struggle to optimize their business output and leave themselves vulnerable to more adoption challenges and employee pushback.

Regional differences – or lack thereof

Comparing respondents from the United States vs. the United Kingdom, there are very few differences when it comes to the workplace training skills and offerings leaders and learners desire. However, one glaring difference is that 34% percent of US respondents said they attend workplace training at least once a month, compared to only 22% of UK respondents. While the difference is significant, both numbers suggest just a small segment of employees are attending workplace training programs on a regular basis.

FIGURE 11

How often do you participate in workplace training
(All respondents – by region)



34%

OF US RESPONDENTS SAID THEY ATTEND WORKPLACE TRAINING AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH

22%

OF UK RESPONDENTS SAID THEY ATTEND WORKPLACE TRAINING AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH

Creating more inclusive and effective workplace training

Businesses looking to build lasting value in their business and customer outcomes, improve operational workflows and generate better quality products and services should start by implementing a strong and effective workplace training program. By offering continuous learning and development programs that are part of employees' work-based learning, employers will empower employees while creating an environment that encourages continued growth. This creates a culture where learning and growth go hand-in-hand with overall business success – while ensuring the continued use of industry best practices.

Employers should also look to redefine how they structure their L&D offerings, ensuring they align employees' specific learning needs with the overall team and business goals. Defining training goals and ensuring they are attainable and celebrated is a great way to grow employee satisfaction and engagement with programs – while helping them connect with the business. Successful learning programs offer both individual- and community-based learning opportunities. Where personalized role-specific learning programs allow employees to learn critical skills and quickly implement what they have learned in their day-to-day work, community-based learning teaches employees valuable communication and collaboration skills as they work toward a common goal.

Employers cannot only consider the effect of workplace training on the value and quality of a business' outcomes, but they must also fulfill employees' needs to grow and gain opportunities while increasing job satisfaction and employee morale. As more and more businesses embark on a digital transformation and continue to update their processes, they must bring their workplace training programs to the forefront of innovation as well and find better ways to make training more accessible and relevant to their most valuable assets – their employees.

By offering continuous learning and development programs that are part of employees' work-based learning, employers will empower employees while creating an environment that encourages continued growth.

Methodology

Emergn partnered with independent research firm Researchscape to survey 1,209 professionals from the United States and the United Kingdom working at companies ranging from medium-sized (100-999 employees) to enterprise-level (10,000+ employees) that offered some form of workplace training. The survey was conducted between July 20 and August 6, 2022, and focused on the opinions of learners, those at the management level or below, and leaders – specifically IT directors and HR leaders responsible for overseeing workplace training.

3 key questions to consider when developing a workplace training program

1. How available are your workplace training programs?

of respondents feel they do not have the time to participate in workplace training. By folding L&D into employees' workloads and leveraging technology to make learning accessible wherever and whenever, HR leaders can remove many barriers hindering workplace training participation.

2. Are you feeding your employees' appetite to grow?

of learners want to continue growing through workplace learning by gaining new skills...

by improving their confidence in their current roles and...

by gaining access to new access to new opportunities

By designing workplace training programs that are both personalized to an employee's role and career aspirations, employers can increase engagement, improve job satisfaction and employee retention, build robust leadership pipelines, and satisfy employees' desires to expand their knowledge and skillsets.

3. Does your workplace training align with ongoing or future transformation plans?

of leaders say they do not have a workplace training program that aligns with their organization's transformation plan. Not aligning L&D training with transformation plans is a missed opportunity by businesses that can lead to employee pushback, slow adoption times for new technology and processes, and delays in business operations.

About Emergn

Emergn is a technology and management consultancy founded on the belief that long-term competitive advantage is rooted in the way organizations work. We partner with leading global organizations, including Fortune 500, FTSE 100, and Global 2000 companies, to design and embed a work operating system (work OS) that shapes how work is structured, delivered, and continuously improved. It integrates three performance dimensions: process, people, and technology, to enable consistent execution and adaptability over time.

Our Value, Flow, Quality (VFQ) philosophy underpins this approach, helping organizations move from project-centric models to product-led, outcome-driven ways of working. VFQ also underpins Praxis, the first product development platform designed for how product teams work and learn.

Emergn has its US headquarters in Boston and its EMEA headquarters in London. For more information, visit Emergn's website and follow Emergn on LinkedIn.

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