

Learning innovation 2023-24

Where are we now and what's next for building better learning experiences?

As organisational challenges, economic headwinds and the pace of change continue to accelerate, the need for learning teams to innovate continues to grow. There has never been a more important time to be great at learning! But how great are we at enabling corporate learning today? And what changes in how we support learning should we be prioritising? How should we be preparing to make learning great in 2023-24?

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Why is this important?

Disruptive forces are accelerating

For many economies recession is now a serious risk¹. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted² 2023 will be tough as it forecasts contraction in a third of the world economies. In the UK, the prospects are challenging with the Bank of England³ warning of the longest recession since records began⁴.

From a sense of optimism at the start of the year, as the world adjusted to COVID, CEOs are understandably becoming more pessimistic⁵. They have good reason to be, with significant challenges from climate change, sustainability and ecological collapse, along with the challenges of changing demographics, energy security, and the pace of technological innovation driven by the 4th industrial revolution. So, while there is pressure to tighten belts many organisations know they must invest in attracting and retaining people to support business transformation.

The availability of skills is a huge challenge

Despite the economic challenges, labour shortages and the availability of talent are also major concerns. Most CEOs (71%) expect⁶ talent shortages to continue across their workforce and nearly all expect to see talent shortages for specific roles. In the UK, the number of active job postings has been above the level of unemployment since August⁷.

As *Duncan Brown*, principal associate at the Institute for Employment Studies reflects:

¹ UK economy expected to be in recession until summer 2023, says latest EY ITEM Club forecast, EY

² Latest Global Growth Forecasts Show Challenges Facing Economies, IMF

³ Monetary Policy Report - November 2022, Bank of England

⁴ Bank of England expects UK to fall into longest ever recession, BBC

⁵ Fall 2022 Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey, Deloitte

⁶ Fall 2022 Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey, Deloitte

⁷ UK Job Shortages Continue With Jump in Demand for Childcare, Bloomberg



“To the many unusual situations HR has faced in the last two and a half years, we now have potentially a simultaneous recession & recruitment / retention crisis.”

It's a trend borne out in our own HR Realities 2022 research⁸ in which 95% of HR professionals reported that the availability of talent is becoming a significant challenge.

What are your organisation's most significant business challenges?



Fosway HR Realities Research 2022 ©Fosway Group

To combat this, CEOs and their organisations continue to focus on improving the employee experience, company culture and supporting flexible working. To address the issue of talent shortages almost 60% of CEOs say they are investing in upskilling and reskilling their workers⁹. Training, learning and people development are central to enabling organisations to function effectively as well as to innovate.

L&D are under pressure to drive skills

⁸ HR Realities 2022, Fosway Group

⁹ Fall 2022 Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey, Deloitte



development with greater efficiency and effectiveness

As a result, skills enablement is seen as the most essential HR initiative for 2025 by HR professionals and solutions that can address skills gaps are high on the priority list. 59% of HR professionals now say skills enablement is essential for future-proofing their organisation¹⁰.

So, L&D teams are now under pressure to scale up not only the learning that delivers performance today, but also the culture and workforce development that can enable organisations to deliver the new products, services and solutions that will make them effective tomorrow.

To meet these increasingly complex demands whilst not disproportionately increasing operational costs, L&D teams are having to embrace more learning technology and innovation.

COVID had a major and lasting impact on learning innovation

Most L&D teams have already embraced digital learning and innovation, with 96% of L&D professionals reporting that they made changes to their L&D strategy in response to the pandemic, with two in three making complete or significant changes to how they supported people development¹¹.

Those changes were deep and lasting. Fewer than 5% expect their learning approaches to go back to what they were before the pandemic¹².

We can see how L&D has changed from a comparison of approaches between 2018 to 2022. The adoption of digital learning has advanced dramatically, as learning teams expanded their use of

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¹⁰ HR Realities 2022, Fosway Group

¹¹ Digital Learning Realities 2022, Fosway Group

¹² Digital Learning Realities 2021, Fosway Group



technology to support individuals across the entire learning cycle, from decisions about what and how to develop, multi-channel learning delivery, learning on the job and building mastery.

How has L&D teams' support of learning changed 2018 to 2022?

10% ▲

Increase in support for individual learning decisions about what and how to develop

21% ▲

Increase in the adoption of multi-channel delivery to support learning

24% ▲

Increase in supporting more application of learning on the job

12% ▲

Increase in helping learners to develop further mastery and expertise

Fosway Digital Learning Realities 2022 ©Fosway Group

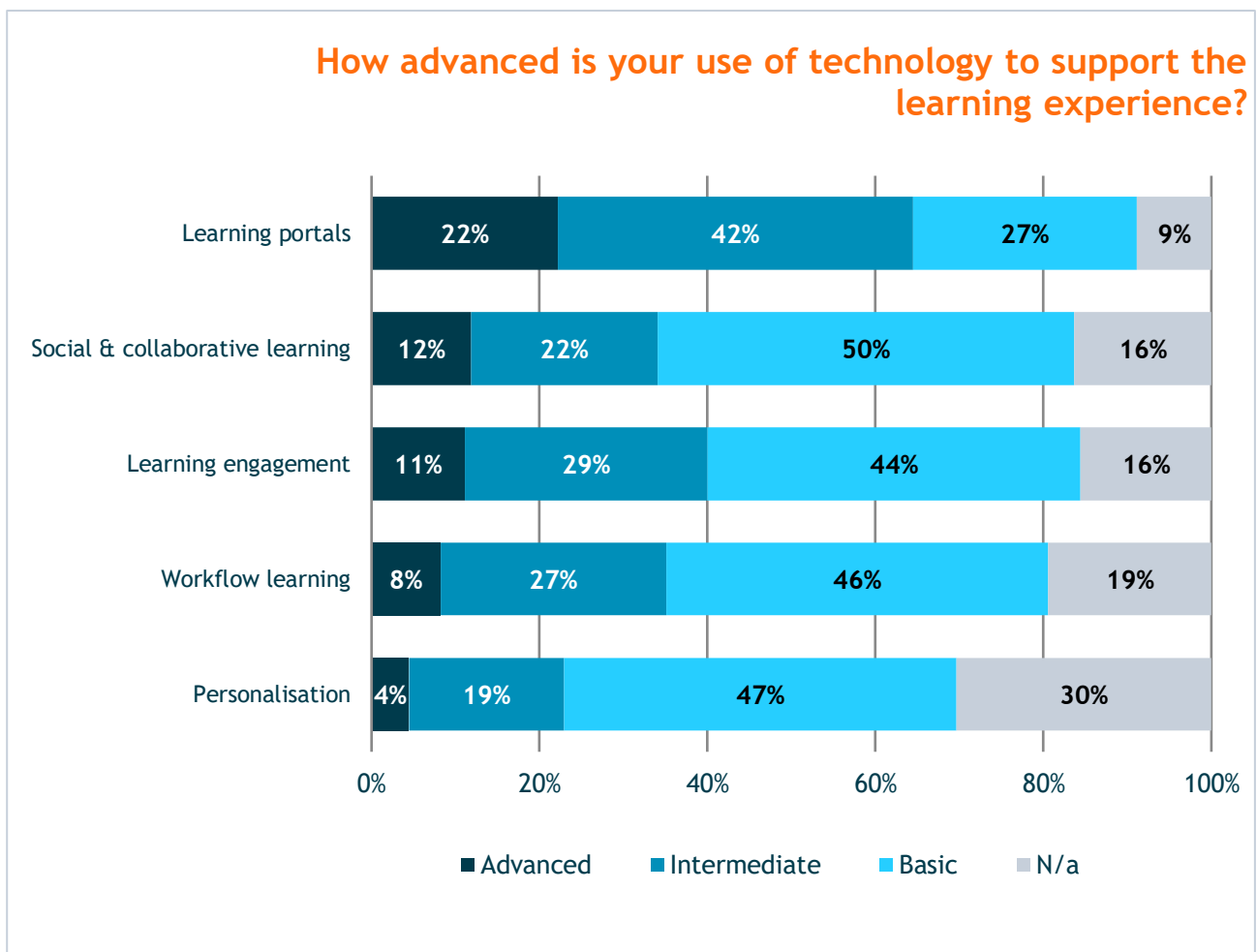
And it's a trend that is likely to continue to build, as L&D teams are intent on increasing their investment in learning technology most notably around content, platforms, services and extending the digital learning expertise of their internal teams.



But there is huge room for improvement

Despite, or maybe because of the rapid adoption and growing investment in learning technology, the reality is that most L&D teams are only delivering a basic learning technology experience to support their learners.

When asked how advanced their use of technology is in supporting the learning experience, less than one in four would say they are advanced in the adoption of online learning portals. Whether it is about social and collaborative learning, learning engagement, workflow learning or personalisation most are only using learning technology at a basic level. This represents a huge opportunity and risk for L&D teams.



Fosway Digital Learning Realities 2022 ©Fosway Group

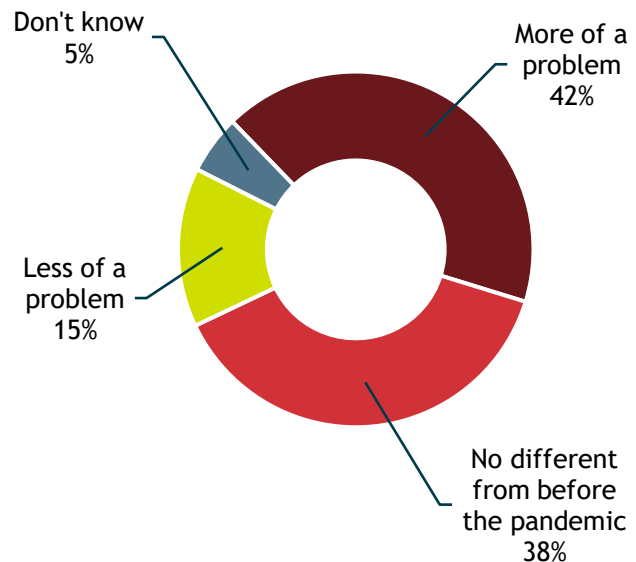


The risk is that their approach to digital learning isn't powering the outcomes or achieving the effectiveness or efficiency it should. Which given the scale of change is in turn a risk for organisations in terms of their own effectiveness and efficiency.

It also risks turning learners off from learning. Our research shows that 42% believe digital learning fatigue is a growing issue for learners in their organisation. And only 15% think that digital learning fatigue is less of an issue for their learners.

There is clearly room for improvement.

How much is 'digital learning fatigue' becoming an issue for your learners?



Fosway Digital Learning Realities 2022 ©Fosway Group

What should you do?

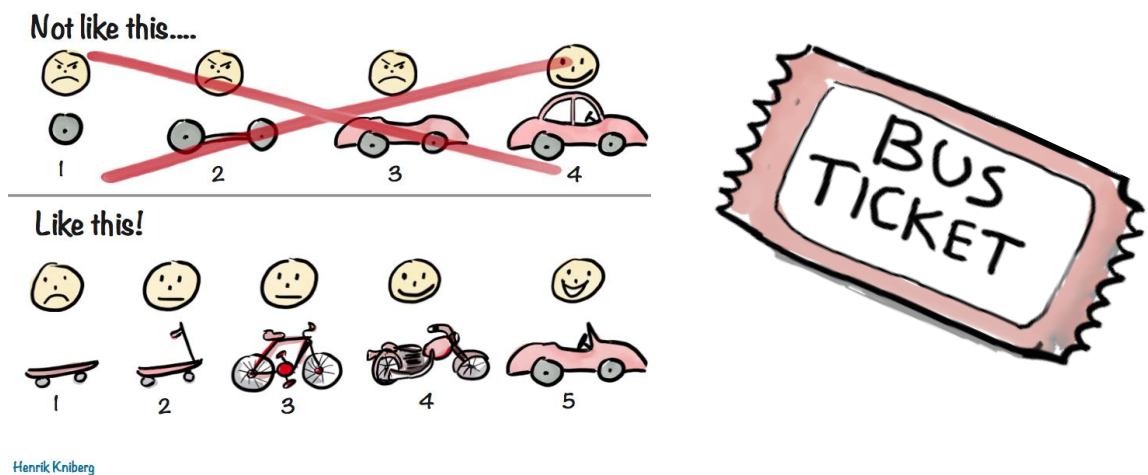
So, what should you do to raise your game? What innovations in learning should you be adding to your toolbox to provide greater organisational learning efficiency and effectiveness?

Embrace agile thinking in learning

There has often been a propensity for L&D teams to revert to delivery as the first answer to any demand for training or learning. And this drives many into the trap of thinking about building the best complete solution, rather than thinking about what will drive the most significant value in the shortest amount of time. With an agile mindset, we look for the most useful option that could start

to solve the problem, as a minimum viable product.

In learning that means not simply waiting until you've built the programme before you start to enable learning, but to make immediate suggestions to enable people to start their learning, such as reading a book about the issue or finding out what great looks like for your competitors or other market leaders. As *Henrik Kniberg* explains, it's about having a solution that solves the problem. And a minimum viable product (MVP) may be the simplest starting point, which may not involve building something at all.



<https://blog.crisp.se/2016/01/25/henrikkniberg/making-sense-of-mvp>

Leverage the efficiency and effectiveness of adaptive learning

“Adaptive learning” or “adaptive training” is a learning experience that is tailored to the individual. The focus, complexity and format of the learning experience adjusts based on the learner’s prior experience, (the context) and their existing level of knowledge, skills, behaviour and expertise. The learning adjusts to present the best next challenge or content to move the learner most efficiently through their individual need.

So, the learning structure is triggered at each step and the learner’s experience is shaped in reaction to their display of expertise (knowledge, skills and behaviours). The main goal is to



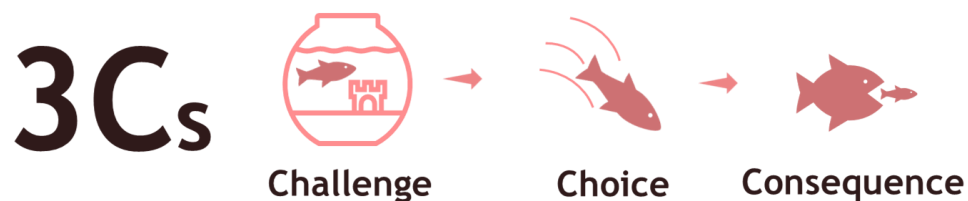
optimise their learning journey and build on strengths and focus on filling any gaps in knowledge, skills or behaviours.

This underpins personalisation and drives efficiency because the learning path is customised to the individual.

Embrace immersive learning

In immersive learning the learner is placed in a 'real world' situation and can explore, learn and practise how to effectively work through a scenario. As a technique it enables the application of knowledge, skills and behaviours in a 'safe' environment and involves resolving real world challenges - just as they would in the moment at work. Learners can rehearse tasks and follow processes, procedures or behavioural scenarios as they would in the real world of work.

The immersive learning experience is defined by the 3 Cs: challenge, choice and consequence.



The ability to enable this active learning approach has been transformed by games-based learning solutions, virtual reality, augmented reality, simulations and branching scenarios. These approaches create a visceral and affecting learning experience in which people can practise and build skills or behavioural proficiency before they do things in the real world. A recent research report¹³ revealed the effectiveness of this approach:

- Learners are almost three times more confident to act

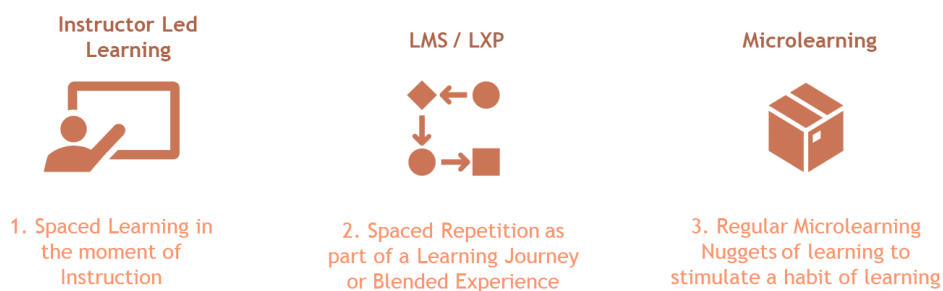
¹³ The Effectiveness of Virtual Reality Soft Skills Training in the Enterprise, PWC



- Four times faster than classroom training
- Four times more engaging than traditional elearning
- Four times more emotional impact than classroom training.

Enhance learning through spaced repetition

Spaced learning creates better learning because it helps us avoid problems of cognitive load, attention by chunking content and helps us achieve deeper learning through practice and repeat retrieval – which are critical to building neural networks in our brain – as part of the process of building memories and lasting understanding.



This can be achieved through spaced instruction¹⁴, devised by Dr Paul Kelley, which achieves astonishing results, or spaced learning journeys that create a pathway of different learning interventions, be that a quick quiz, follow up with a manager or some reinforcing content, or through daily microlearning content to keep knowledge topped up. Learning innovations like spaced repetition have the ability to strengthen and optimise our learning and aid learning retention by **up to 80%**.

Focus on the human experience

Human interaction, especially around feedback, mentoring, coaching and encouraging reflection,

¹⁴ Making long-term memories in minutes: a spaced learning pattern from memory research in education, Frontiers



are important drivers of motivation and effective learning. However, this has been missing from traditional approaches to digital learning which have mostly focused on enabling individual learning. But we need to leverage peers, managers and members of our team – as well as subject matter experts – if L&D are to scale and enable more impactful and effective learning. That means encouraging learners to show what they know, demonstrate their skills and get feedback – so learning is active, and action-based in work, as much – if not more so than – just focusing on self-paced learning inputs. We are social animals, and our adoption of learning technology should prompt people connections, build learning networks, and the real time interaction of social learning at every stage of the learning cycle – from input, through to action and supporting feedback and reflection.

Use *skills* to create greater relevance and strategic alignment

There has been a revolution in understanding organisational skills over the past four years. Using artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning, organisations are beginning to build a deep understanding of the skills and capabilities of their organisation in only weeks as well as assess how their skills profile compares to other organisations and against industry trends. This is bringing transparency to strategic workforce planning and the future skills that make employees more employable and relevant to fast-moving organisations. Remember, in the past eight years the skills required to do a job have changed on average by 41%¹⁵ - so just to stand still in the role you needed to be learning!

With that in mind, building skills through strategic workforce planning is now a critical driver of people development. So, it's important your learning team is actively involved in understanding the wider organisational journey around the skills it needs to support.

Build touchpoints across the employee

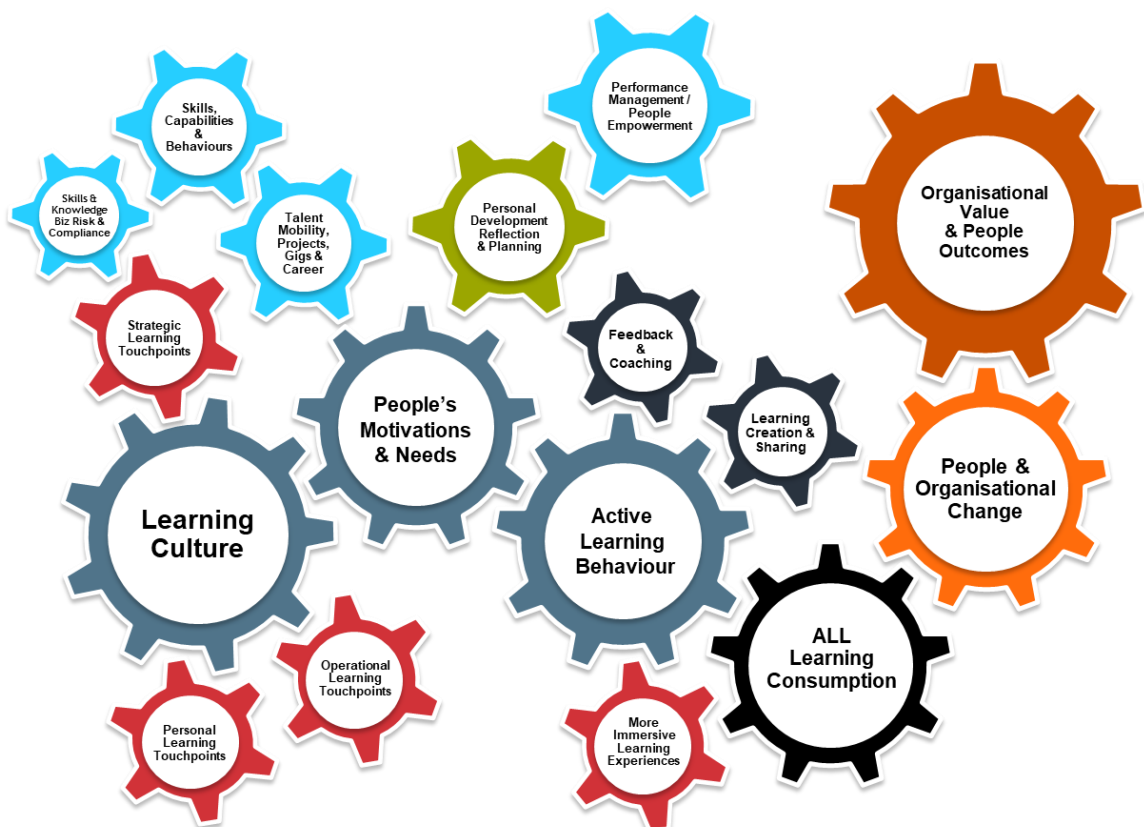
¹⁵ Future of Skills, LinkedIn



experience

Finally, it's important for learning teams to break the cycle of endless learning delivery and learning programme support and work closely with other parts of the HR team to think about how learning supports other people processes, be that performance management, employee engagement, talent mobility, careers and rewards.

By aligning with HR touchpoints across the employee experience you can enable more of a learning culture and enable the strategic flexibility so many organisations crave. You can also drive wider learning adoption, better leadership and management and prepare your organisation for the challenges that we all face in the years ahead.





A New Way to Think about Learning Engagement

It's not possible to move learning through one cog alone. L&D can drive greater value by supporting skills and behaviours, personal development planning, performance management, business risk and compliance, feedback and coaching. It's a new way to think about how we power learning engagement because learning engagement is no longer a funnel to formal learning. In modern organisations it is an engine of motivations, touchpoints, adoption and consumption that drives outcomes.



Recommended Fosway Reading

For further Fosway analysis relating to this topic, please see the following papers or resources.

- [Digital Learning Realities 2022](#)
- [Digital Learning Realities 2021](#)
- [HR Realities Research 2022](#)
- [PLASMA Learning Cycle](#)
- [The Reskilling Revolution](#)
- [2022 9-Grid™ for Digital Learning](#)
- [Transitioning from talent management to people success](#)



Accelerate and De-risk

To talk to us about our research on learning and talent systems, or to discuss what it might specifically mean for your organisation please contact us directly.

We will use our independent expertise to provide you with the guidance needed to accelerate and de-risk your decisions. We have a wealth of experience, tools, research, and profiles at our disposal. We do not have any products to sell, and we have no vested interest to bias your outcomes. Our focus is concentrated on pragmatic, independent advice.

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For over 20 years, we have been analysing the realities of the market, and providing insights on the future of HR, Talent and Learning. Fosway analysts work extensively with our corporate clients to understand the inside story of the challenges they are facing, and their real experiences with next gen strategies, systems and suppliers. Our independent vendor analysis also provides a vital resource when making decisions on innovation and technology.

And just like the Roman road we draw our name from, you'll find that we're unusually direct. We don't have a vested interest in your supplier or consulting choices. So, whether you're looking for independent research, specific advice or a critical friend to cut through the market hype, we can tell you what you need to know to succeed.

Example clients include Alstom, Aviva, Boots UK, BP, BT, Centrica, Deutsche Bank, Faurecia, HSBC, International SOS, Lloyds Banking Group, Novartis, PwC, Rolls-Royce, Royal Bank of Scotland, Sanofi, Shell, Swiss Re, Telefonica, Thomson Reuters, Toyota Europe, and Vodafone.

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