



Personalized Learning at Scale:

Building the Corporate Brain

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Current State

As organizations face unprecedented change and volatility, they recognize the importance of reskilling and upskilling their workforce to meet new demands. However, most remain challenged to accomplish it.

Brandon Hall Group Research found that **only about 36% of companies** believe they are prepared to develop the skills they will need in the future.

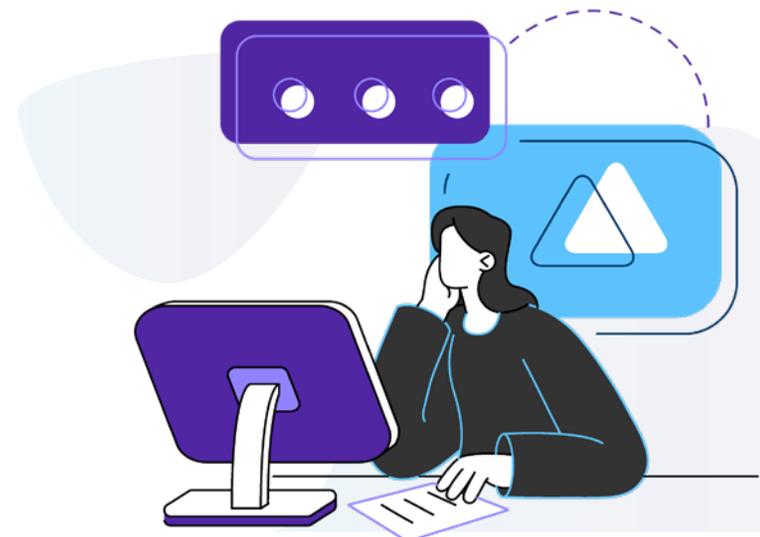


Business is moving too fast, and the workforce is too busy, distracted and dispersed for traditional training models to be completely effective.

Organizations find themselves in a challenging spot regarding learning's strategic role in the business. On the one hand, more than three-quarters of companies say that business leaders would rate learning as highly important to the organization. This makes it clear that learning is a priority and a critical success lever. However, only 45% of companies rate themselves highly on how integral learning is to

the organization's culture. This is driven by learning's apparent disconnect with the business. Learning strategies are not aligned with business outcomes and the actual process of learning for many employees

seems completely divorced from their jobs. Making learning more personal, relatable and easier to access within the flow of work transforms it into something more impactful and sustainable.



The momentum is there; 82% of companies say they are working on improving their approach to personalized learning. And the push is coming from all sides, as 70% of companies say learners are asking for it and 64% say the business is.

Actions being taken to improve personalization

Adopting new learning processes



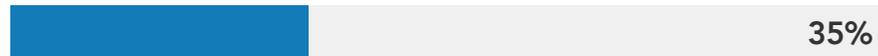
Elevating the awareness of need/importance of personalized learning in the organization



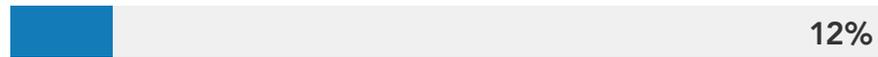
Technology evaluations/selections



Retraining learning organization



Hiring new learning professionals



Source: Brandon Hall Group, 2021 Upskilling & Reskilling Study



Complexities

Companies must transform their approach to reskilling and upskilling to be more flexible, adaptable and focused on their learners. Today's learners lack access to the knowledge and information they need when and where they need it. They feel little-to-no connection with the learning they are provided. This lack of alignment, connection and context causes the biggest challenges and results in unmet outcomes. Learning feels disjointed and separate from the job, deterring people from becoming actively engaged in their development.

The number-one challenge to personalized learning for

companies is that managers don't have any insight into what their employees are learning. This element is often overlooked, and managers play a huge role in contextual, flow-of-work learning.

As with many initiatives, the lack of technology plays a big role in personalized learning. Delivering at scale requires a specific ecosystem to develop and deliver personalized learning. For many companies, this is an entirely new endeavor that can seem overwhelming. Nearly half say that it would be too difficult to administer and maintain and 47% say their organization is not properly trained to design and deliver personalized learning.

On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you consider the following to be challenges in delivering personalized learning at scale?

68%

We have managers who are not very good coaches and don't know what their employees are learning.

We do not have the technology ecosystem in place to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.

60%

54%

The organization believes a one-size-fits-all approach to learning is sufficient.

We believe it would be too expensive.

54%

48%

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

Our learning organization is not properly trained to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.

47%

46%

We do not promote peer-to-peer collaborative learning.

We don't have a good handle on how to reach our learners effectively and efficiently.

46%

1 = Not at all; 5 = Very important

Source: Brandon Hall Group, 2021 Upskilling & Reskilling Study



Consequences

If organizations want to put their workforce in a position to win, they must help them learn more and at a faster pace. Because each individual has their own learning needs, companies must create and deliver personalized learning at the scale the organization requires and expects. Learning leaders who take their cues from consumer technology experiences and the latest neuroscience research can create more contextualized learning experiences for any size workforce. These experiences drive learner engagement, knowledge retention, behavior change and performance improvements that have a measurable impact on the business.

Only

50%

of companies believe their approach to learning is positioning them well to meet future work requirements.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is personalized learning for helping achieve the following outcomes?



1 = Not at all; 5 = Very important
Source: Brandon Hall Group, 2021 Upskilling & Reskilling Study

If people lack ready access to the knowledge they need for their roles, they cannot be expected to improve their performance. Companies should make it easier for this knowledge to be shared and leveraged. Also, the use of communities of practice is growing and they thrive on knowledge sharing. If the knowledge is hard to find and share or is not relevant, these communities will fall apart and leave individual learners trapped in their own knowledge silos.

Critical Questions

As organizations seek to adopt and improve the learning personalization, they must answer several critical questions, including:

- Is our learning strategy well-aligned with both learner and organizational outcomes?
- Are we applying learning- and brain-science principles to our learning experience?
- Which tools and technologies will help facilitate personalized learning at scale?
- Are we properly leveraging the role of managers in the learning experience?
- Are our learning development and delivery processes agile enough to keep up with the needs of the business?

Brandon Hall Group POV



What is the right approach? There isn't one solution that fits every organization. But there are several consistent truths. Chief among them is that people really need and want access to knowledge. They are drowning in information but getting the specific knowledge they need in the moment can be a challenge in an environment where employees require connections to learning resources daily, weekly or even multiple times daily. A

static, event-based training and learning strategy does not suffice.

Half of companies rate themselves 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale on how ready they believe their approach to learning positions them to meet future-of-work requirements. Those companies that are well-positioned have a much better handle on personalized learning and the technology required to deliver it at scale.

What do they do **better?**

They have the technology ecosystem in place to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.

They have a solid understanding of what learners need and what drives them.

They have managers who are very good coaches and know what their employees are learning.

They have methods for collecting and distributing subject matter expertise at scale.

They have been able to find the right content in the marketplace.

They promote peer-to-peer, collaborative learning.

Strategies to Drive Personalized Learning at Scale

Ensure Tight Alignment Between Business Goals and Learning Outcomes

Personalization cannot exist without alignment, which starts at the top. A well-developed learning strategy is the number-one element in personalized learning, rated as important or critical by 90% of companies. Not far behind that is the need for learning to highly align with the objectives of the business (88%) and the personal and professional goals of learners (84%).

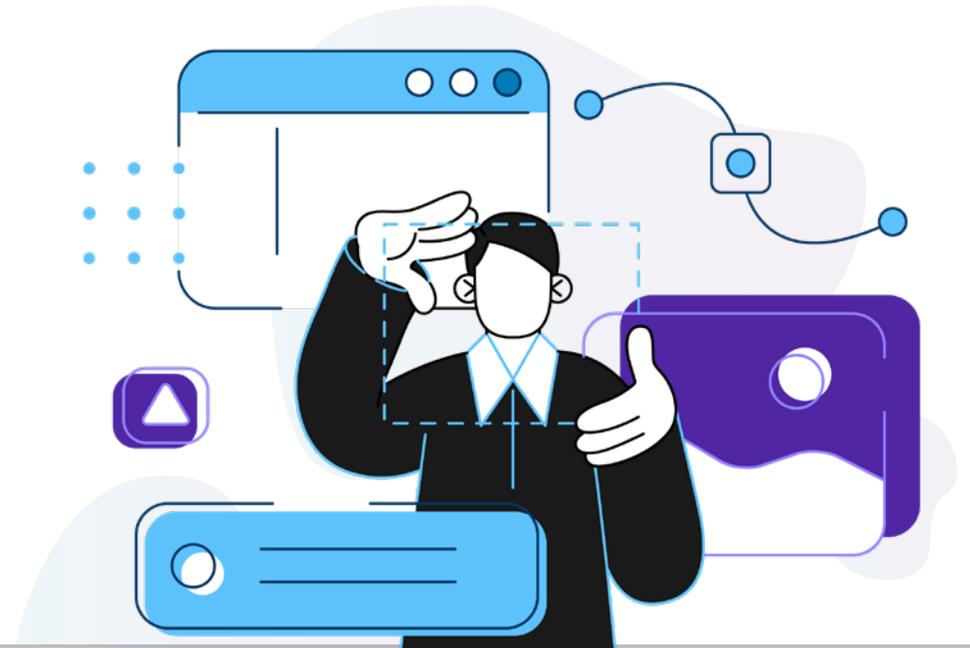
To establish this alignment, companies must include business leaders and other stakeholders in the development of the learning strategy. This helps L&D better understand the needs of the business and assists stakeholders in understanding how learning can respond to those needs.

Additionally, learner feedback should be incorporated into the learning strategy. A company can't hope to meet the needs of learners if they don't know what they are. Having a deep understanding of each audience in the organization will help create alignment

between the business goals and how the workforce can achieve them. Articulating this alignment to learners gives them the critical "what's in it for me" that is often missing from learning, which drives engagement.

This exercise of alignment also helps crystalize the

metrics of success before the learning programs are developed. Knowing what outcomes are expected and how they will be measured not only makes it easier to measure learning's impact but can be used to shape personalized learning experiences.



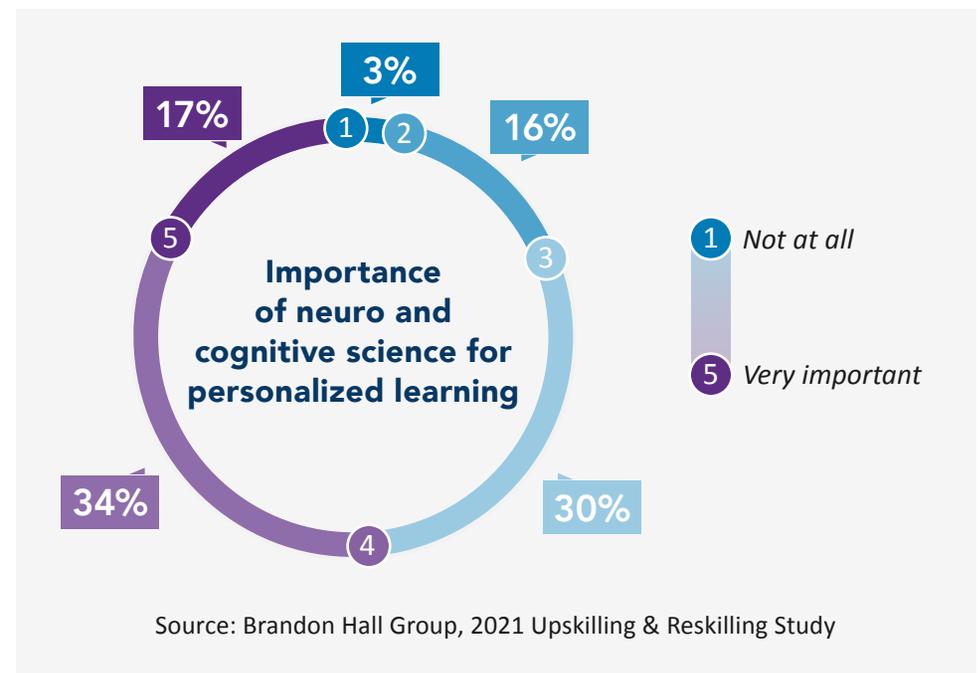
Employ Neuro and Cognitive Science Principles

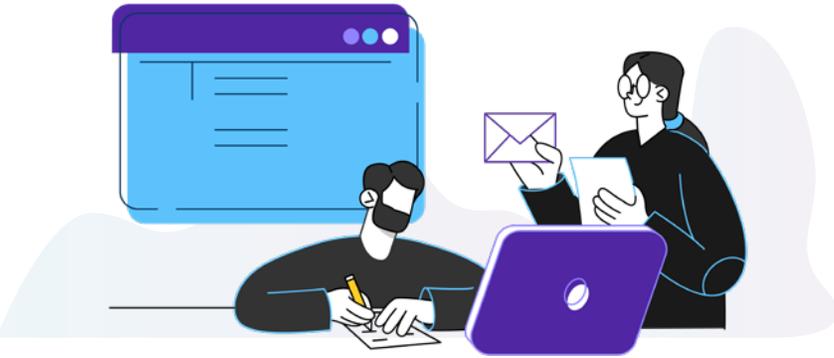
People continuously learn every day by consuming knowledge. Organizations should tap into that kind of learning experience and build programs, elements and experiences that align with how people naturally learn. Using content and technology that brings knowledge into the flow of work is a critical part of this. When people are free to pursue their own active learning experience and follow their curiosity, they are far more likely to be engaged, retain knowledge and change behaviors and improve performance.

To be successful, learners must learn how to learn

and solve problems flexibly. These processes are critically important for working memory to succeed. Working memory is critical for people to recall the information they need at the moment they need it. Personalized learning helps ingrain the knowledge more deeply so it can be retained and overcome the Forgetting Curve.

Additionally, learners' brains should focus on learning experiences with dynamic spatial and temporal structures. This is why a series of event-based, formal experiences will never deliver the same results as an approach that includes more frequent, in-the-flow-of-work learning opportunities.





Managers and Supervisors Need to Play a Critical Role

One big blind spot when it comes to learning for most organizations is the role of the manager. And while much time and energy are spent on leadership development and programs to develop managers, very little thought is given to the role managers play in their employees' learning.

Part of a good coaching strategy should include discussion and feedback around learning programs — not just performance and workflows. Knowing that their manager is aware and involved in learning programs makes them more personal and contextual for the learner.

Additionally, these feedback loops can be leveraged to uncover and disseminate the knowledge that exists within the manager/supervisor

population. There are simply not enough coaching opportunities or interactions to transfer the amount of non-codified skills and knowledge subject matter experts possess. Using a platform that makes it easier for learners to connect with knowledge and subject matter experts ensures this knowledge doesn't remain locked away.

As companies strive to ensure learning occurs more

frequently within the flow of work, managers must be involved. No one is better positioned to understand what the flow of work is and how and when learning will fit into and support it than managers. Managers are much closer to the world employees live in day to day than the learning function could ever be, so managers become an indispensable resource for designing contextual, in-the-flow-of-work learning.

82%

of companies that are ready for the future of work say it is critical managers give frequent feedback.

60%

believe their managers are aware and involved in what their employees are learning.



Explore Multiple Tools and Modalities

Relying solely on classes and courses will not ensure people have what they need to do their jobs. Learning is a continuous, ongoing process and people must connect with learning on a much more frequent basis than the traditional model allows. People are now accustomed to nearly instant access to the information they need, so learning must be able to operate on that level.

An effective learner experience includes multiple pathways and opportunities that are available to all employees, regardless of level or role. Some of the elements found in effective environments include:



Hands-on, active, real-world, on-the-job instruction



On-demand online courses, at your own pace



Self-directed/informal from others or on your own



Anytime/anywhere mobile-friendly learning



Audio/video tutorials or demonstrations

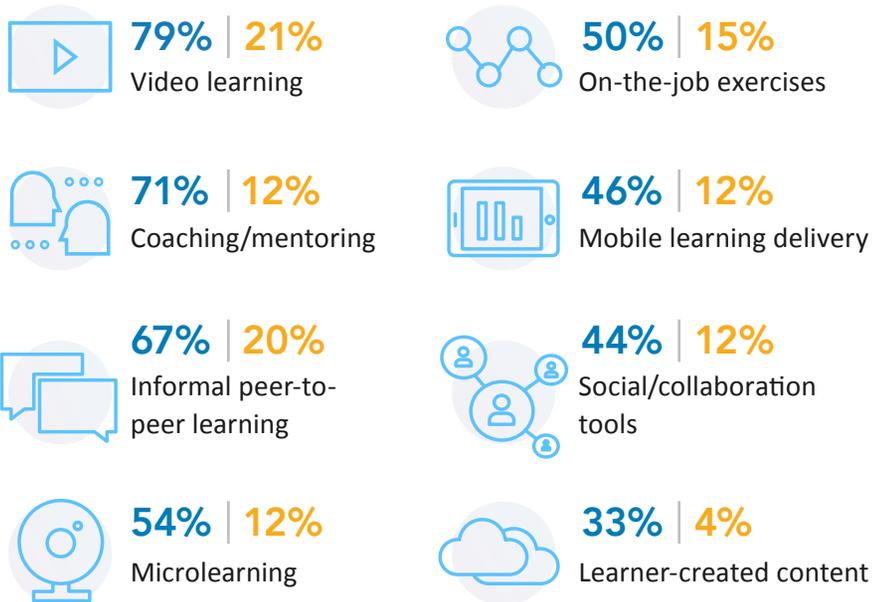


Highly relevant subject matter expertise

Looking again at the “High Impact” companies in Brandon Hall Group Research, we see that these organizations are also much more likely to use a wider array of learning tools and technologies.

Learning Tools Used Regularly or Consistently

● High impact
● Low impact



Source: Brandon Hall Group, 2021 Upskilling & Reskilling Study



Leverage the Right Technology

Any solid learning strategy requires a technology roadmap that lays out how it can be executed. Creating the best learner experience not only requires the right strategy, but also the appropriate technology to make it a reality.

60%

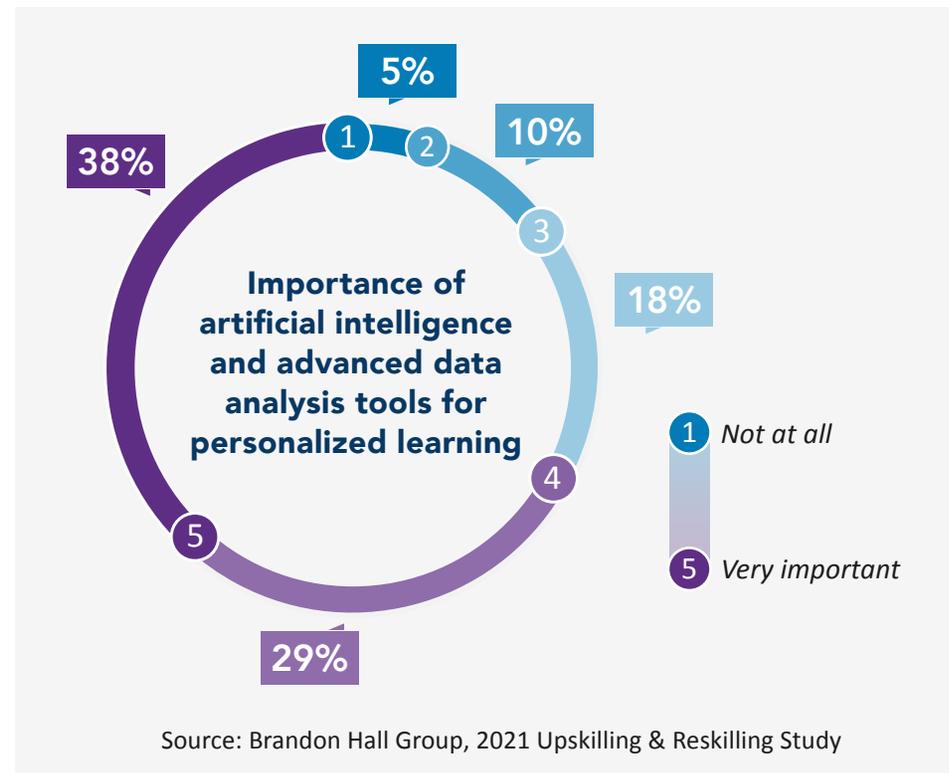
of companies cite a lack of the **right technology ecosystem** as highly challenging to their efforts to support personalized learning.

The kind of highly blended, contextual and accessible experiences that are effective requires a great deal of thought when it comes to technology. A single LMS may not be enough anymore. With an ecosystem that increasingly includes more video, microlearning, simulations and other interactions outside of the class and course, companies must perform robust due diligence on their technology selections.

Another technology aspect critical to personalization is data — what is captured and how it is used. Consumer-facing technologies are using a wide array of detailed information that feeds algorithms to deliver personalized experiences. The learning function

must recognize the need and value of this kind of data as well. Without things such as machine learning powering the technology, personalization is a cumbersome manual process.

This expanded use of data means companies must get a better handle on what data they have and how valid it is. Artificial intelligence is only as intelligent as the data that it uses.



Authors and Contributors



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About Brandon Hall Group

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