

Winckworth
Sherwood



Leadership Development

Insights and Recommendations for Employers



Contents

Foreword.....5

Executive summary.....6

Key statistics and findings.....8

Why should employers provide L&D to leaders?.....10

What could employers do better?.....12

What barriers do employers face to L&D for leaders and how can these be overcome?.....18

Why should employers refresh L&D for leaders?.....24

Approaches employers are taking to L&D for leaders.....26

What improvements can employers make regarding career development into leadership roles?.....29

Our specialist team.....35



Foreword

One of the themes discussed by HR professionals attending our annual Workforce Conference in November 2022, was that learning and development, particularly for leaders, could be improved.

Marcus Buckingham, a leading author and business consultant, said “*people leave managers, not companies*”. In our experience as employment lawyers this really rings true; if an organisation does not have effective leaders this causes retention issues as well as, in the worse-case, employment claims. In the current employment landscape, where recruitment and retention are some of the top issues that employers are grappling with, we see leadership development as vital in ensuring not only the personal growth, wellbeing and retention of the individual leaders themselves, but also more widely the retention of their team and the success of the organisation.

With these themes in mind, we decided to carry out this research to give us some concrete evidence about how both employers and employees currently feel about learning and development (“L&D”) for leaders in their organisations and progression into leadership roles, including what barriers to L&D are faced, how these can be overcome, and what improvements employees are looking for in their own career development.

We surveyed over 1,000 employees and 500 HR decision makers in a YouGov survey from 30 March to 4 April 2023*. 15 L&D and HR professionals and senior leaders also kindly shared their experiences and insights with us in April and May 2023. We are particularly grateful to Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at The Learning and Performance Institute (“LPI”), in sharing her wisdom, which she drew from her considerable experience working in both the UK and the US for Tesla, BBC, Gousto, Camelot and Accenture, which helped us formulate this report.

We hope that you find this report interesting and useful. If you would like to discuss it further, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us about this topic or any other employment issues you are facing.

Best,



Louise and Will

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 500 senior HR decision makers (fieldwork was undertaken between 30 March to 4 April 2023) and 1,008 employees (fieldwork was also undertaken between 30 March to 3 April 2023). The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size. Respondents work for organisations from a wide range of sectors that range in size (from 1 to over 250 employees). All are based in the UK. Of the employees surveyed 53% are male, 47% are female. 21% are under the age of 35, 24% are aged 35-44, 27% are aged 45-54 and 27% are aged over 55.

Executive summary

What is Learning and Development (“L&D”)?

Learning is a process that increases our knowledge and skills whereas **development** is concerned with action – it is about applying the knowledge and skills, which requires practice and refinement.

There are many important benefits of providing L&D for new leaders, including improved business performance, better team retention, improved wellbeing and career advancement. Despite the clear benefits of leadership development however, we were surprised from our research that almost **a quarter of employers were not providing any L&D to new leaders**. Even if an individual has leadership experience from elsewhere or is personally driven to develop their own leadership skills, it is fundamental that they understand what is required to effectively lead their particular organisation, and are supported in being a successful leader in that context.

Of those organisations which were providing L&D to new leaders, **69% said that the L&D is inadequate**. This is a very high proportion of employers and was reported across all sectors. In our report we delve into some of the reasons why leadership development

may not be effective and how employers can tackle this. Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at LPI, identified that for leaders to truly develop, there needs to be a culture of continuous learning throughout the organisation: *“Leadership requires practise. It is the responsibility of the organisation to make sure they are providing meaningful and effective learning experiences that help new leaders feel equipped and supported on their journey.”*

The results of our research show that employers need to give more attention to developing leaders’ so-called “soft skills” with employees reporting that **their leaders were more ill-equipped to lead their organisation in their inter-personal skills and personality qualities compared with their business skills**. Future-skills gaps also need attention with our research finding that **employers were not providing L&D on skills which have been identified as being**

important for the future, including leading change and digital skills.

The overwhelming majority of HR Decision Makers **(84%) felt that they faced barriers in providing L&D to leaders**. The top barriers reported were: (1) finding the time for leaders to develop their skills (50%); (2) financial constraints (34%); (3) lack of internal resource (30%); (4) leaders not following the L&D in practice (24%); and (5) resistance or disengagement by leaders (17%). These can be difficult barriers to overcome and in the report we have shared tips gleaned from our interviews and research for tackling these obstacles.

We were surprised that **only a quarter of employers were regularly refreshing their leaders’ skills** (at least annually), with others doing it much less frequently, if at all. In view of the rapid advances in technology and the disruptive world we live in, skills need to

be regularly refreshed for leaders to thrive, and this should form part of a broader culture of continuous development.

Lastly, we looked at how employees felt about their career development into leadership roles. **72% of employees consider their employer could take steps to improve their career development and progression into leadership roles**. The top improvements employees were looking for are: = (1) a transparent career progression framework; = (1) future proofing of their role and developing new skills to become more agile in the workplace (25%); and (2) providing honest feedback on performance (24%). In our experience, managers often find it difficult to have these sensitive, honest conversations and we have therefore set out below our recommendations for how employers can best go about having those feedback sessions.

Key statistics and findings

23%

of employers do not provide any L&D to new leaders

69%

of HR professionals believe the L&D provided to new leaders is inadequate

Employees believe their leaders are more ill-equipped in their interpersonal skills and personality qualities to lead their organisation compared with their business skills

84%

of employers reported barriers to providing L&D to leaders. The top barriers are: (1) finding the time for leaders to develop their skills; (2) financial constraints; and (3) lack of internal resource

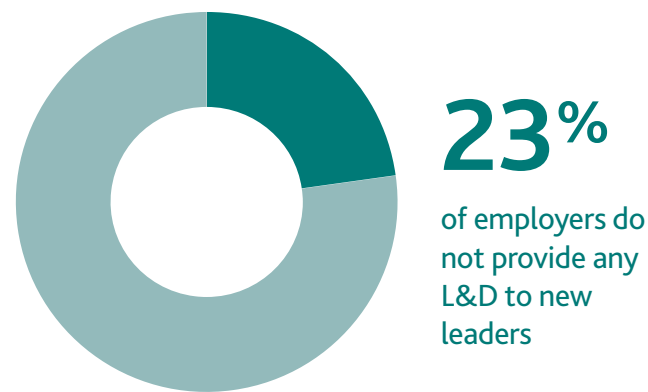
72%

of employees consider their employer can take steps to improve their career development and progression into leadership roles. The top improvements employees are looking for are: = (1) a transparent career progression framework; = (1) future proofing of their role/enabling them to be more agile in developing new skills; and (2) honest feedback

Only a quarter of employers regularly refresh leaders' skills and training (at least once a year)

Why should employers provide L&D to leaders?

Our YouGov survey asked HR decision makers what L&D they provided to new leaders (whether they are employees who are promoted into leadership roles within the organisation or are new recruits joining as leaders into the organisation). We were surprised that just under a quarter of employers reported that they did not provide any L&D to new leaders.



"Everyone has the internet, so they can search 'how to be a good leader', but it's up to the organisation to shape and create the leaders they want. What is a good leader according to this particular organisation?"

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer, LPI

Even if an employee has leadership experience from elsewhere, in order to be effective, they need to know how things are done at the organisation they are working for. Organisations need to identify what skills are essential for both the leader and the organisation to be successful as well as role-specific skills, and what will be valuable in the future. A leader's skills can then be assessed against those criteria and decisions made about what skills gaps there are and how the leader will receive help to close them.

¹ McKinsey & Company, 'The essential components of a successful L&D strategy', 13 February 2019

² LifeWorks and Deloitte, 'Inspiring Insights: Wellbeing and resilience in senior leaders – A risk to post-pandemic recovery', 2021

We believe it is imperative that L&D opportunities are provided to leaders as there are many important benefits of doing so:

1 Better business performance: There is clear evidence that the best leaders drive business performance. According to McKinsey¹: "Organisations that make investments in the next generation of leaders are seeing an impressive return. Research indicates that companies in the top quartile of leadership outperform other organisations by nearly two times on earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). Moreover companies that invest in developing leaders during significant transformation are 2.4 times more likely to hit their performance targets". Leaders need to ensure the team has the right level of capability to drive performance, build psychological safety, and foster creativity and innovation.

2 More positive organisational culture: Ensuring leaders are aware of the organisation's values and priorities, and encouraging them to live these values, will ensure leaders are embedding the culture and enhancing an organisation's brand.

3 Impact on the team: If leaders are not equipped with the right qualities and skills to successfully manage a team, this could lead to team members feeling undervalued and disgruntled leading to retention issues and even potential employment claims.

4 Impact on the leader's wellbeing: Developing leaders so they build healthy behaviours such as resilience, can reduce the risk of leaders feeling disengaged and exhausted, and suffering burnout. Research from LifeWorks and Deloitte² found that 82% of leaders are exhausted and burnout levels have increased, with 50% contemplating exiting their roles, resigning, retiring, taking a leave of absence or moving to part-time work. Due to the difficulties with the economic climate and the many pressures facing leaders, it is becoming even more important to protect and support leaders so that they can thrive in their roles.



"Often in leadership positions, people get there because they are good at their current job, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are good at leading. Without providing meaningful and effective learning experiences, you're saying 'here's the promotion, go figure it out'. The disadvantages of not providing L&D is that whilst some people will figure it out on their own, some people won't and how are they supposed to know that if they are not taught? It's the responsibility of the organisation to help you."

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer, LPI

5 Satisfaction and personal growth: By providing leaders with opportunities to learn and develop, they are more likely to feel satisfied, motivated and engaged with their organisation leading to better retention rates. If there are opportunities for career advancement within the organisation for leaders of different levels, this will be cheaper than having to recruit external leaders.

6 More agile: To remain competitive as an organisation, leaders need to be able to quickly adapt to change such as economic circumstances, technological advances and the expectations of

customers. Leaders need to have the skills to be agile and adaptable solving complex problems quickly and effectively, and bring their team with them on this journey.

7 Learning culture: If leaders are involved in the learning function and understand how important it is in aligning with business strategy, this will embed a learning culture. Leaders are crucial in encouraging their team to recognise the importance of L&D, for instance, by talking about it and what skills they themselves are developing.

What could employers do better?

A large majority of the HR Decision Makers in our YouGov Survey believe the L&D their organisation provides to new leaders is inadequate. Why is this the case?



69% of employers believe the L&D which their organisation provides to new leaders is inadequate

A number of employers still fall into the trap of having the traditional approach to L&D – seeing it as being essentially about one time training events. However, it is much more than that: It is about building a culture of continuous learning.

Ernst & Young

"L&D is much more than providing training for the workforce only. In essence, it is about building a culture of continuous learning throughout the organisation that emphasizes the role of coaching, feedback, leadership and ownership.... [which] requires powerful transformations in processes and mindsets."³

³ Ernst & Young, 'The ever-growing importance of L&D in the future of work', 3 March 2022

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer, LPI:

"It's all about the culture of learning; that employee experience" and "ongoing L&D by learning through the flow of work".

When learning is event-based and not part of a bigger development experience, it will be difficult to build the momentum for meaningful leadership development as behavioural change takes time.

Alison Tisdall, Founder and CEO at Mind3:

"It's about creating a conversational place; that conversation creates the motivation that changes the behaviour. It's not the knowledge or even the access to the knowledge. The real cultural shift happens in sequenced leader dialogues at every level of the organisation at the same time – this is what makes the most difference".

Encouraging reflective learning i.e. encouraging the individual (or group) to reflect on what they did well, how they could do more of that in the future and what they could do next time to do something even better is a very important part of the L&D process. Leaders need to practice, redefine and develop their skills. Leaders may perceive that they benefit less from the reflective approach as they are already "masters at the craft" and so there is limited vicarious learning happening. Robert Knight, Learning and Development Manager at Winckworth Sherwood LLP, however challenges this opinion: "peer learning is still applicable and indeed learning from juniors (especially on new trends or technology) is possible".

Ernst & Young also identifies that there needs to be a strong alignment between the corporate strategy, the talent agenda and the learning agenda to achieve a continuous learning culture that helps the organisation and workforce to move in the right direction. L&D should not work as a stand-alone function but closely with other parts of the organisation to support the business strategy.



What else should organisations consider for leadership development to be effective?

1

It needs to be attention grabbing

It is about keeping the content and delivery fresh and making sure it is about something the leader has not heard before – so they are truly learning.

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer, LPI says:

"It is the job of L&D to create content that is worthy of grabbing someone's time".

Alison Tisdall, Founder and CEO at Mind3 commented:

"Make it so relevant that leaders will make it a priority".

2

Use a range of methods

Using a range of methods to facilitate L&D (both formal and informal) such as formal training courses, mentoring, networking etc. are all important in enabling the successful delivery of L&D, particularly as some leaders may prefer certain types of formats over others.

3

More focus on "soft skills"

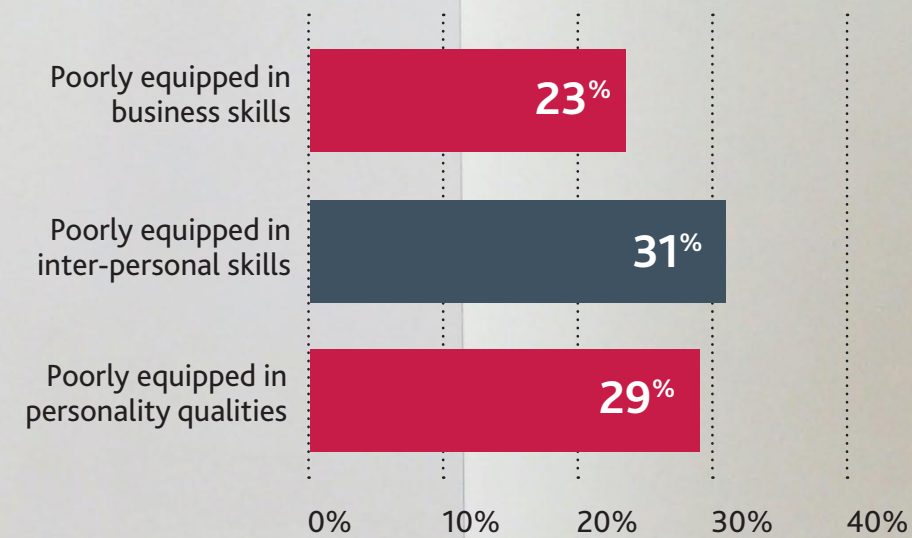
When we asked employees in the YouGov survey how equipped they considered their leaders were in different types of skills, employees said their leaders were more ill-equipped in their interpersonal skills and personality qualities to lead their organisation compared with their business skills. We also found from the YouGov survey that employers are providing more learning in hard skills (aside from team management) such as understanding/knowing the business and business development than soft-skills such as developing authority/presence/impact and influence, and resilience/looking after your own wellbeing.

We believe there should be more focus in L&D on the so called "soft skills" or human skills which are the personal qualities that help leaders really thrive in the workplace.

Alison Tisdall, Founder and CEO at Mind3:

"There's an expression – 'soft skills are the hard skills'. Soft skills are mislabelled. Human beings are social creatures and work is a social system. What we are working on when working on ourselves is the ability to regulate our emotions, shape identities and inspire others. The days of thinking otherwise are gone. The nature of psychological safety and purpose is well understood, and it is foundational to most programmes".

Employees: How well equipped would you say leaders in your organisation are in having the right business skills, inter-personal skills and personality qualities?



Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer, LPI:

"Empathy is a key driver of success. So, employees want communication, understanding and honesty from their leaders".

Natasha Wallace, Founder and CEO at The Conscious Leadership Company:

"The workplace is evolving at pace, with employees wanting a more human and conscious approach to leadership. It is expected that leaders operate in an inclusive and authentic way, able to respond to the wellbeing needs of the teams they lead. Great leaders attract and inspire great people and the best talent will vote with their feet, if they don't have a good experience at work. The relationship they have with their line manager is central to this and requires leaders to understand and be able to respond to the needs of the workforce. Being a conscious leader is about having a high degree of self awareness and an intentional approach to leadership that sets clear purpose and direction for teams. It means seeing the value in continual learning and supporting the development of those around you. It means placing relationships, trust and connection at the heart of team performance, while building team resilience by leading in a balanced and solution focused way. This contemporary and necessary approach to leadership requires the development of very important 'soft' skills that enable leaders to tap into a level of awareness, beyond the day to day actions and responses which tend to be automatically programmed into all - in the age of distraction".

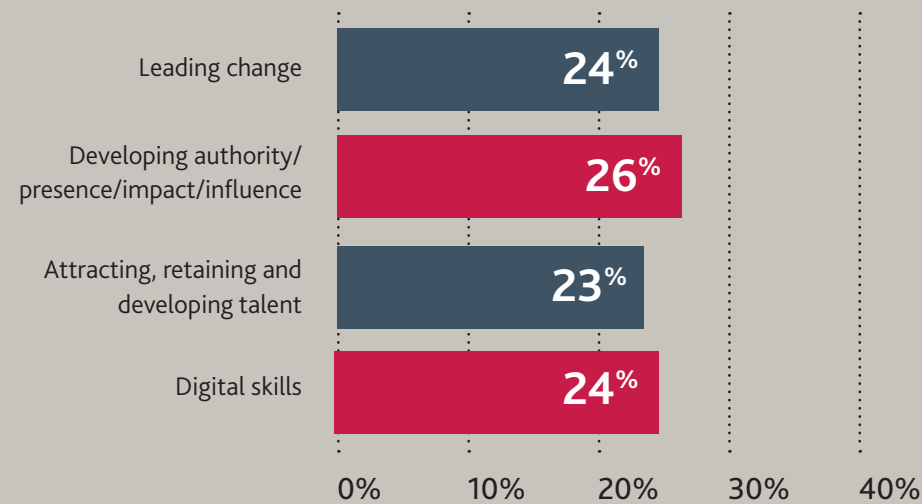


4

Future-proofing

DDI's Global Leadership Forecast 2021⁴ found that leaders are not being adequately prepared for the future and they found significant skills gaps in areas like managing change, building talent, influencing, digital acumen and strategic thinking. We were therefore surprised to find from our YouGov survey that only around a quarter of employers were providing L&D to leaders on leading change (24%); developing authority/presence/impact/influence (26%); attracting, retaining and developing talent (23%); and digital skills (24%).

Topics employers are providing L&D to leaders on



We have already highlighted the importance of considering the context of the organisation when determining what skills are important for its leaders. However, as part of this assessment, the skills that are necessary to ensure the future success of the organisation should also be considered.

McKinsey⁵ advocates going further than looking at the additional skills that leaders should have in an era of disruption: *"They [leaders] must, in fact, reimagine themselves, undertaking inner work to shift their mindsets and consciousness to see the world anew; to rethink their interactions, roles, and ways of working as part of leadership teams; and to reimagine their organizations and the industries in which they operate."*

⁴ DDI, 'The Leadership Skills Gap: What it reveals about the future', 14 June 2021

⁵ McKinsey & Company, 'New leadership for a new era of thriving organisations', 4 May 2023

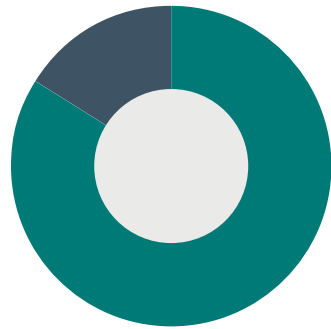
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Measure the outcome

Measuring the outcome of the L&D will be useful in considering how effective it is and the return on investment. It can also identify what is not working and areas for improvement. There are traditional methods of data collection such as obtaining feedback from leaders as to the quality and usefulness of training sessions but outcome based data should also be collected, such as the impact on individual performance, employee engagement and team effectiveness. Catrin Gaston-Penny Human Resources Director at Catapult explained that they have *"implemented Employer Net Promotor Score surveys (which is a way of measuring how likely your employees are to recommend your organisation as a good place to work) to ensure that we get feedback on what we are currently doing to ensure that it is still relevant"*.



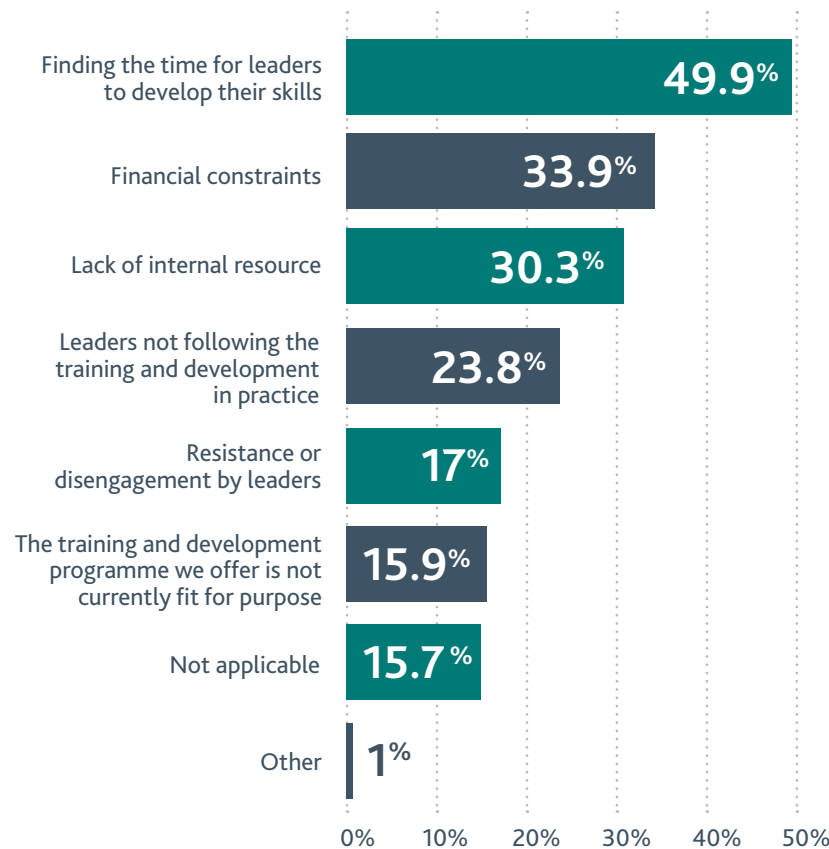
What barriers do employers face to L&D for leaders and how can these be overcome?



84%

of employers reported barriers to L&D for leaders

L&D barriers reported by HR Decision Makers



EMPLOYERS CITED THE TOP FIVE BARRIERS TO L&D FOR LEADERS AS:

1 Finding the time for leaders to develop their skills

The top barrier reported in the YouGov survey was time constraints. This was also a common theme amongst our interviewees, particularly where leaders are involved in revenue-generating work with the perception that L&D is taking them away from that. We were interested to see that this came up as the top barrier above cost.

In talking to Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at the LPI about her tips for how an organisation can deal with this barrier, she recommended:

"L&D needs to collaborate across the business to regain that valuable time. That involves moving away from that thinking of 'I need to take a day away from my job to go on this course'; it's about incorporating that learning into the flow of work, for example through conversations, through feedback from managers and how that is then applied to learn as we go."

Organisations might still need an immersive training course but it is not seeing those immersive experiences as the one point of L&D – the learning needs to be put into practice so the leader continually betters themselves."

To overcome this barrier:

- There needs to be buy-in to L&D at the very top level so that leaders at all levels are encouraged and supported to preserve sufficient, uninterrupted time for L&D. Influencing senior leadership to recognise the importance of L&D by really understanding the benefits of L&D to both employees and the business, for example, by showcasing success stories, will be important here.
- Leaders at all levels need a clear answer to the question "what's in it for me?" when they are assessing the priorities of their time. Will the L&D advance their careers? Will it help them tackle difficult issues they are facing with their team? Will it result in higher financial reward e.g. will part of their performance based pay being dependent on how much time they spend learning?
- There needs to be a culture of learning within the organisation. Dr Toby Simpson, Director, The Wiener Holocaust Library said: "We have gone a certain distance to change the culture of the organisation and increase the prioritisation of learning and development for leaders." Alison Tisdall, Founder and CEO at Mind3 says: "On a macro level, learning to learn and having a learner mindset is important. Everyone is a learner. We can't help but learn and that's fundamentally different to turning up and saying, 'I'm an expert in finance or strategy', it's saying 'I'm a learner in finance'. It's a mindset: I'm going to learn new things all the time and that's a way of taking personal accountability".
- Consideration needs to be given to how L&D can be designed so that it fits with the organisation's strategy and culture. For example, could self-paced, on demand learning which allows leaders to take charge of their learning and fit it into their schedules as and when they are able, be the right fit for the organisation?

If there are more immersive learning experiences, Claire Davey, Senior HR Business Partner Manager at Sysmex, shares her tips in relation to more immersive learning experiences and how organisations can ensure leaders have time for these:

"Availability of managers is one of our biggest barriers however we overcome this by trying to plan 6 months in advance, offering a variety of dates across the working week to accommodate those that do not work full time and by having the full commitment of their senior manager/director that they will attend the learning and development opportunities in place."

2 Financial constraints

The second barrier was financial constraints. Senior leaders being influenced to recognise the purpose of L&D will be key here in carving out a budget. A clear business case to the Board could help here:

Joanne Kelly, Senior Human Resources Manager, Total Performance Data:

"In terms of the barrier of budget for L&D, we put together a clear business case to the Board so the Board is fully aware of the benefits of the L&D. We then obtain feedback from employees and measure retention after the L&D has been implemented to be able to report back to the Board on whether the L&D has been successful or unsuccessful".

Tracey George, COO of TPP Recruitment commented:

"One of the things we have done is accessed free support for SME's from a consultancy called Q5 which has been specifically around leadership and strategic business planning and this has taken the form of live consultancy sessions as well as more general webinars e.g. 'Situational Self-awareness'".

Dr Toby Simpson of The Weiner Holocaust Library explained that what they can offer:

"is quite limited by budgetary constraints but they have access to skills training courses provided by the Pears Foundation to grantees. These include team building, and use of leadership and coaching methods like Action Learning,".

By way of another example, our Firm, Winckworth Sherwood LLP, is part of a business improvement district, Better Bankside which puts on free webinars, training and networking events for employees on topics such as public speaking, resilience and mental health awareness.

It is also thinking about how L&D could be implemented without there being significant financial costs: L&D is not all about external training courses or qualifications which can require significant financial investment; informal learning including in-house coaching and mentoring, leadership shadowing, on-the-job learning, lunch and learn sessions and networking with peers is also just as important. By using internal leadership development an organisation can utilise a low-cost, highly effective opportunity to teach, coach, mentor and develop leaders.

There may also be free support and resources or funding that your organisation can utilise.



3 Lack of internal resource

Lack of internal resource was reported by employers as the third barrier to L&D for leaders, and there is no easy answer to this one as depending on the size of the organisation it may not be feasible to have a dedicated L&D function. Our recommendation here is for the organisation to be very clear on what the purpose or return on investment is going to be and linking this as much as possible to the organisation's strategic goals i.e. be clear on what you are trying to do. What is crucial for the L&D programme should be carefully considered so that this can be concentrated on, without overstretching internal resources as, if too much is taken on, the quality of the L&D could be compromised or not be successful at all.

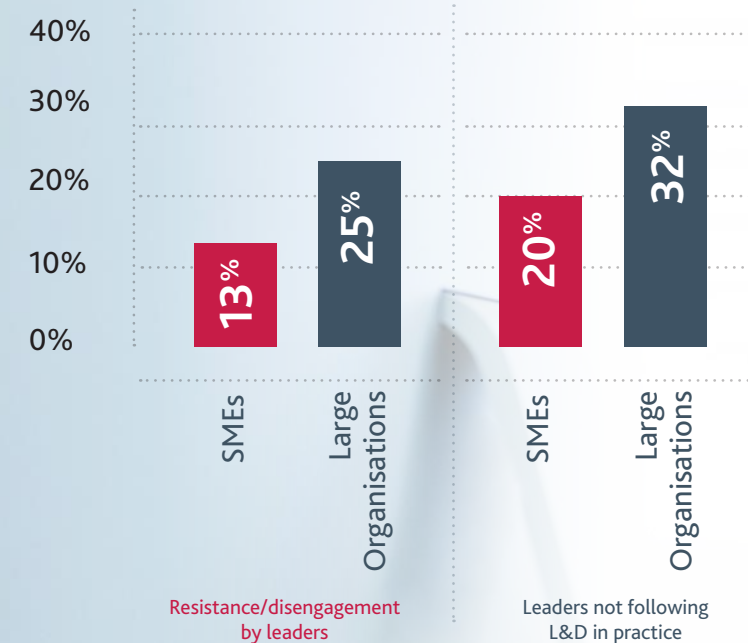
Robert Knight, Learning and Development Manager at Winckworth Sherwood LLP, comments that:

"Having limited resource can be an issue but shouldn't necessarily inhibit a learning culture of developing. I think the idea of the 70-20-10 model of learning is still useful to follow. That is 10% of professional development occurs through formal training interventions; 20% from learning from others; and 70% learning from experience on the job and reflections. With that in mind organisations with limited budgets and resources can still enable learning to occur, but the approach perhaps just needs to be thought through and considered more".

- 4 Leaders not following the learning and development in practice
- 5 Resistance or disengagement by leaders

The fourth and fifth barriers were leaders not following the L&D in practice, and resistance or disengagement by leaders. Larger organisations (250+ employees) reported this was much more of an issue than SMEs:

Barriers to L&D by size of organisation



Robert Knight, Learning and Development Manager at Winckworth Sherwood LLP, considers the barriers are more prevalent in larger organisations because there is not as much accountability:

"Leaders are not in as close proximity to senior leadership to be accountable and buy-into the L&D whereas with smaller organisations, it is more exposing if leaders do not attend a training session for example".

We were concerned to note that leaders were not following the L&D in practice in around a third of large organisations (32%) and 1 in 5 SMEs. People tend to forget what they have learnt unless there is regular practice and reinforcement to turn the new knowledge or newly learned skills into behaviours or habits. Without this vital part of L&D, leaders' behaviours will not change.

To overcome both of these barriers, leaders need to understand the value of L&D to both the organisation and to them personally, and be held accountable for their L&D journeys e.g. through regular check-ins with senior leadership to discuss their progress and having a culture that values effective leadership.

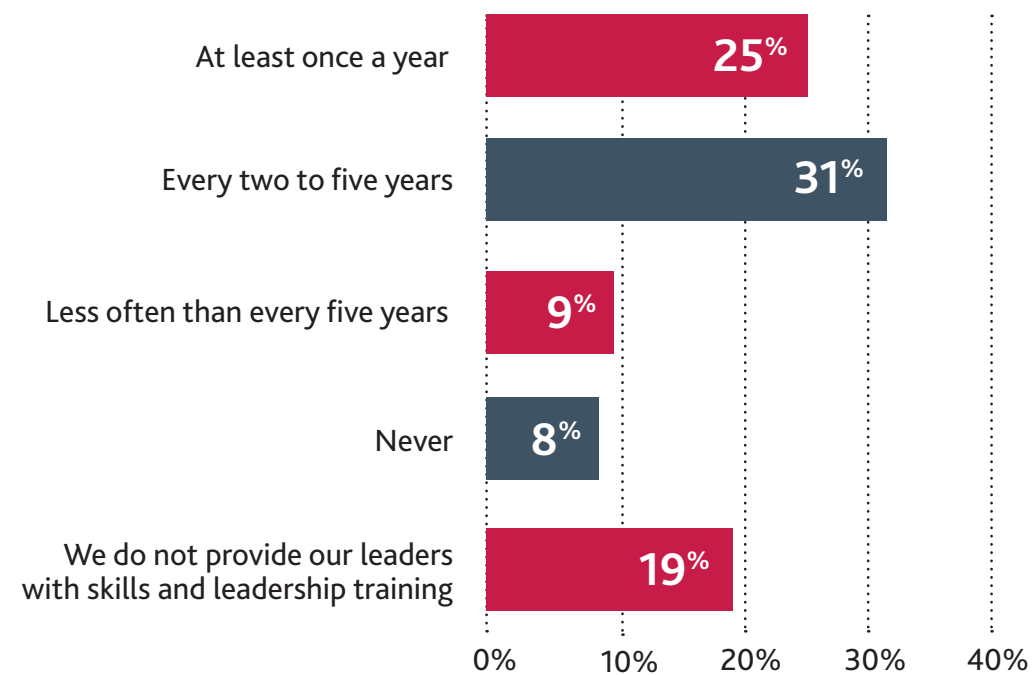
Why should employers refresh L&D for leaders?

Given the rapid advance of technological change, and shifting customer demands in a world that is becoming increasingly unpredictable, it is more vital than ever that leaders' skills are regularly updated. We were therefore surprised to learn that only a quarter of employers refresh their leaders' skills and training at least once a year, with others doing it much less frequently, if at all.

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at the LPI advised that:

"The business environment is constantly evolving. Keeping up with data and technology to remain effective is imperative. Refreshing training helps with advocating a learning culture. It improves performance by providing people with better skills on how to manage teams better, communicating more effectively. Often senior leaders have done training years ago but there is nothing left for them when they get to a certain level, so what are those top niche skill sets that they can learn and develop?"

How often do you refresh your leaders' skills and leadership training?



Furthermore, in keeping with the advice of the various experts we have referred to in this report, as well as having more formal refresher training and learning experiences, there should also be more informal strategies that are embedded within a broader culture of continuous development with leaders having a learning mindset and continually learning even at a senior leadership level.

Catrin Gaston-Penny, Human Resources Director at Catapult

"Our training is on-going and is part of everyone's development plans and is also reflective within our values. All development is discussed during appraisals and also as part of everyone's 1:1s (which are carried out either weekly or bi-weekly)".

Tracey George, COO at TPP

"Development is always ongoing. We encourage the sharing of any fresh ideas that employees hear of so that we can incorporate this into Thinking Council topics, shared learning or some other format".



Approaches employers are taking to L&D for leaders

We interviewed a number of employers across a range of sectors to find out the approach they are taking to leaders' L&D in practice. We have included in this report a selection of the themes that we discovered from these interviews across the 70-20-10 model for L&D, which is a widely used model that 10% of professional development occurs through formal training interventions; 20% from learning from others; and 70% learning from experience on the job and reflections.

Formal training interventions

One theme that emerged was a focus for some on ensuring that managers have the soft skills necessary to effectively manage a team.

Claire Davey, Senior HR Business Partner Manager at Sysmex, told us that, as part of their broader training programme for new leaders, the company runs a course which

"aims to provide them with basic fundamentals on how to manage their team in a practical way. It gives guidance on how to complete a good appraisal, how to performance manage, deal with disciplinary, sickness, and support the team with mental health...". Claire said that the organisation also runs courses on "Mental Health for Managers which is delivered by MIND".

A number of employers also placed importance on leaders being able to manage the different dynamics that emerge within teams.

Christian Werner, Head of People & Organisation at Scope Group said that leaders were trained to

"understand the dynamics that are at play when they are leading a team".

Learning from others

Several employers sought to facilitate and encourage peer to peer learning.

Nathalie Brulé said that the chefs in her organisation

"have a supper club...so they can experience what other chefs are doing".

Tracey George, COO of TPP Recruitment has found that informal peer learning can be very beneficial:

"regular internal 'Thinking Council' meetings, which have a very specific format really do enable shared learning, diversity of thought and encourage creative problem solving, active listening and innovation".

Many of the employers we interviewed also offered coaching to new leaders, so as to address the specific needs and requirements of the individual and help them to overcome any obstacles and challenges in their roles.

Catrin Gaston-Penny, Human Resources Director at Catapult explained:

"We implemented a coaching and mentoring platform to sit alongside our LxP (Learning Experience platform), which has directed and self-selected learning programmes and modules, and our Senior Leadership and Leadership programmes for high performers".

Experience on the job and reflections

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at LPI emphasised the importance of having learning through the flow of work:

"You can do that one-day training as an initial starting point, and then you need that learning in the flow of work to put it into practice, to continually better yourself. Psychological safety is key. I might have learnt something 6 months ago, but not have applied it. I might then make a mistake. How have I got support to make sure I have that safe-to fail blanket beneath me? The word 'ongoing' needs to be in there and we need to be ensuring that we create meaningful and impactful learning experiences. There is no one-off, it's your ongoing L&D".

Our employers shared how they did this in practice:

Tracey George, COO of TPP Recruitment, shared that it is about

"having good thorough follow up from any training to ensure it is embedded and put in practice with observations, role play and asking for evidence of implementing the learning".

Christian Werner, Head of People & Organisation at Scope Group said:

"We think that life-long learning is relevant in these dynamic times and therefore, we have found a kind of hybrid approach that we have combined, functional expertise training with coaching. When you are moved into a specific role, you are trained on the job with an external coach if required to overcome some obstacles. Then they should be trained in a structured way, to understand dynamics as a leader, own individual aspects as a person, dynamics of a team, the tool or methodology to use".

Nathalie Brulé, HR Director of Lincoln's Inn, said that new managers attend a course which

"covers topics such as how to have difficult conversations, management style, emotional intelligence, and resilience" and that they have seen the benefits of this with "managers being more confident; needing less HR support and having fewer HR issues raised".

Zoe Rumford, Chief People Officer, at Catapult Group International shared that

"employees complete Mental Health awareness training with a smaller voluntary cohort trained as Allies".

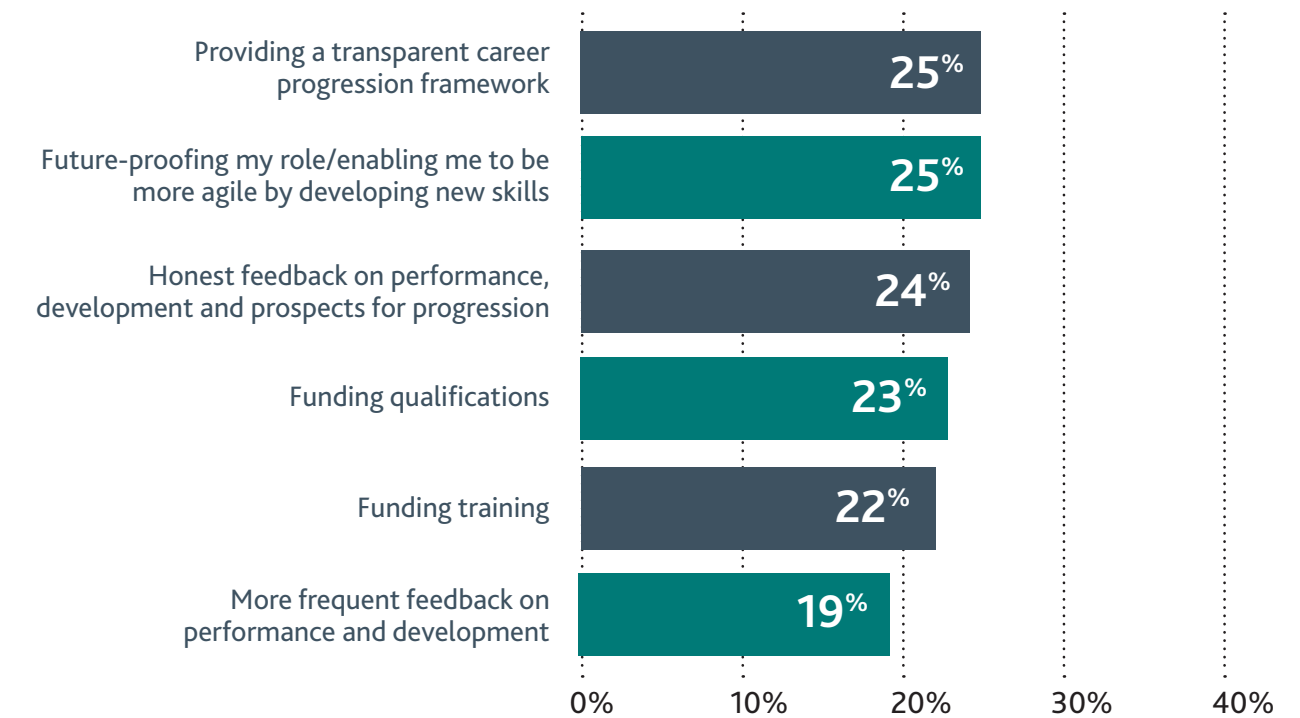




What improvements can employers make regarding career development into leadership roles?

As well as looking at L&D for new leaders, we also wanted to explore how employees felt about their career development pathways into leadership roles. Of the employees surveyed, 72% considered that their employer could take action to either implement or improve their opportunities for career development and progression into leadership roles. The top six improvements that the employees surveyed called for are set out in the chart below.

Which, if any, of the following do you think your employer could implement/ improve to aid your career development and progression in(to) leadership roles?



The areas that employees placed most emphasis on were providing a transparent career progression framework and helping them develop new skills to become more agile in the workplace. This was closely followed by providing honest feedback on performance, development and prospects for progression into leadership roles.



72%

of employees considered that their employer could take action to either implement or improve their opportunities for career development and progression into leadership roles

A higher proportion of the younger generation felt that their employer could do more to improve their career progression: 56% of employees aged 55 and over considered their employer could take steps to improve their career development versus 83% of under 35s; 81% of employees aged 35-44 and 72% of employees aged 45-54. This differential may be because more older workers have already progressed into leadership roles.

Providing a transparent career progression framework

According to Bain and Company⁶, "creating strong career paths starts with determining the required skills and competencies to reach various roles or career stages. Next, the leadership team can identify available training and professional development resources for employees to gain those skills. Finally, clearly and consistently communicating that information to employees enables them to make informed decisions and pursue growth opportunities at the company".

Several of the employers we interviewed incorporated many of these elements into their career progression frameworks:

Catrin Gaston-Penny, Human Resources Director at Catapult:

"We worked with external consultants to develop our framework which includes competencies and career road maps for all levels across the whole business. This piece of work has been the basis on which our new People Strategy has been built on and we have included a number of other development initiatives including Psychometrics to enable all employees to understand their drivers and the impact that they have on others not only their direct peers, but within their team and across other teams. We have also seen a dramatic decrease in headcount turnover as a result".

Claire Davey, Senior HR Business Manager at Sysmex

said the company had developed a clear career development pathway where "Each role has criteria associated with it that the employee must demonstrate that they can meet prior to be considered for the progression" and that the business then funded the necessary training and qualifications to support progression.

Morwenna Scholes, Head of HR at Bristows LLP

said, "we have a comprehensive set of competencies for all levels of fee earner, so that fee earners know how to achieve promotion".

Robert Knight, Head of Learning & Development at Winckworth Sherwood LLP

emphasised how crucial it is to ensure that employees are actually aware, from an early stage, of the criteria that must be fulfilled, and any relevant processes associated with promotion. He says, "Having that long-term visibility is important, as it allows individuals to engage with the relevant criteria, make choices and execute actions that give them an element of control over their destiny". Robert recommends that staff are provided with information about promotion on a regular basis and are actively encouraged to engage with it.

Future proofing the role/ becoming more agile

With the disruptive world we are living in it is perhaps not surprising that one of the top improvements that employees wanted was for their employer to support them in future-proofing their role and developing new skills to become more agile in the workplace. With the shortage of candidates in the job market for certain roles, it also makes sense for organisations to be focussing on developing their existing employees to fill those gaps where possible.

Sarah Hatton, Chief Learning Officer at LPI:

"Often, people think about career progression as linear, but you need to also think about lateral moves. It is important in thinking about the future of learning in terms of it being about skills and not just qualifications. Yes, there will be roles that are qualifications based, but how can we think about developing that wider set of skills. It's about connecting the skills to your current workforce because you can't find the exact fit out on the market".

⁶ How Clear Career Paths Strengthen Retention and Diversity, Bain and Company, 11 August 2021



Providing honest and more frequent feedback

As the results of our research suggest, around a quarter of employees (24%) feel they are not receiving honest or sufficient feedback in relation to their performance and prospects for progression. Providing feedback is a key element of any development framework, as it allows employees to align their performance with the criteria necessary for promotion. In that respect, Robert Knight emphasised the importance of selecting performance indicators that reflect the business's values, culture and broader aims so that employees know how "good" performance is defined within their organisation.

However, employees can only align their performance with those criteria if they receive direct and honest feedback from their managers. Many managers report finding it difficult to have sensitive discussions about performance. Our research also found that there was a gender difference with more men (26%) than women (21%) wanting more honest feedback.



Top tips for effective conversations about performance

1

Rapport

Feedback is only beneficial if it is completely candid. Equally, the person receiving the feedback must feel able to honestly discuss their own challenges. It can therefore be helpful if the person responsible for having those conversations has a close and friendly working relationship with the employee in question.

2

Good intentions

Feedback is only constructive when it is given for the benefit of the recipient's development and is not tainted by any emotional response to perceived shortfalls in performance. Before having such conversations, managers should check that they are seeking to communicate the feedback in question for the employee's benefit. It can also be helpful to communicate the intention behind the feedback. So you might tell the employee that, whilst what you have to say might sound harsh, you are raising it because you want to see them succeed.

3

From the horse's mouth

There are always two (or more) perspectives when any shortfalls in performance are highlighted. Ideally, feedback should therefore be given directly by the person who experienced the performance in question, so that the employee can give their perspective and a constructive dialogue can emerge. If feedback is given through an intermediary (for example, during a formal appraisal), then the manager should share the feedback and ask the employee to comment, rather than simply delivering the feedback as a direct statement of fact.

4

Be representative

When collating feedback, managers should also ensure that the comments sought are likely to be representative of the employee's performance as a whole. As Robert Knight says, "you might have received negative comments from 3 managers, where 12 others would have had positive things to say. If in doubt, seek input from the employee about who you should be speaking to".

5

Be timely

Ideally, feedback should be given immediately after the performance issue in question took place, so that any issues can be addressed at an early stage. Otherwise, the employee may continue to repeat the same behaviours which could in turn damage their prospects for progression.

6

Be positive

Research suggests that there should be approximately 7 positive comments for every development point raised. Robert says, "part of that is that you are more likely to engage and motivate people if you focus on what they do well". Furthermore, as most people are also predisposed to focus disproportionately on negative feedback, focusing more on the positives helps to address that, and reduces the chances of negatively affecting an employee's confidence and self-esteem.

For any development framework to be effective, it is also crucial that managers and more junior staff meaningfully engage with the development process. For that to happen, both managers and juniors must have a clear understanding of the value of the process and be invested in it. In that regard, Robert Knight highlighted the importance of seeking input from managers when designing a performance framework and encouraging them to think about how investing in the process might benefit them as well as aspiring junior staff – for example by exploring how adding to their employees' skillset might then free up their time to focus on other areas of their work that genuinely excites them.

Once any shortfalls in performance or skills have been highlighted through an effective development framework, like Bain and Company, Robert recommends that the employer offers training and coaching in order to bridge

those gaps. Providing training was also an area which many of the employees we surveyed felt their employers could improve upon.

Robert says "coaching can be quite powerful to enable someone to think about these things, it gets people reflecting on what they can do, their commitment or will to do something. They then engage with that process a bit more actively". A number of the employers we interviewed provide training and coaching in order to help employees progress. For example, Christian Werner, Head of People & Organisation at Scope Group stated, "When you have chosen a particular [career] path, you will then be supported by the company with our training and coaching policy". Similarly, Claire Davey, Senior HR Business Manager at Sysmex said, "The Company is committed to funding training qualifications and training to support employee's progression into leadership roles".

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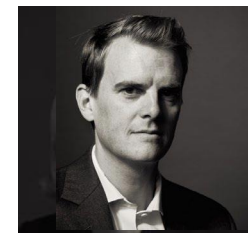
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SARAH HATTON
Chief Learning Officer, The Learning & Performance Institute (LPI)

Sarah has over 20 years experience working in L&D and Talent teams in both the UK and the US for some well-known global brands such as Tesla, BBC, Gousto, Camelot and Accenture. She has a passion for organisational culture and employee experience and ensuring that the role of L&D isn't simply to take orders from the business for training. Sarah is a qualified coach, MHFA and she values the importance of focussing on individual behaviours through tools such as Insights Discovery, StrengthsFinder, DISC and how they can collectively shape a culture. Sarah joined the LPI at the end of 2022.

“They provide nuanced but clear advice and are able to think both strategically and be reactive when needed. We have been really impressed by how quickly the team have responded to all queries.”

Chambers 2023

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