



WHITE PAPER

Lead the change: leveraging technology to meet learning's biggest challenges



schoox



Introduction

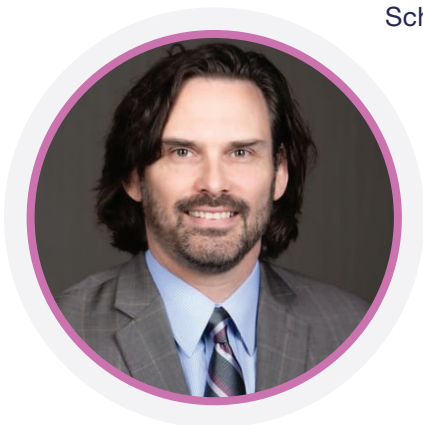
Foreword from David Wentworth, Learning & Talent Development Platform Evangelist, Schoox

Organizations have spent the last three years hearing nothing but stories of challenges, complexity, uncertainty, and volatility. It's enough to create a mindset of panic and anxiety high enough to create analysis paralysis, where companies are afraid to make any significant changes.

We are here to help companies look forward and be a force for positive change. Rather than continually reacting to a series of events, organizations must take this opportunity to transform how they support and develop talent to be prepared for anything. It is time to stop thinking in terms of “learners” and “training” and focus on performance and development.

The right learning strategy can align with constantly shifting business needs and deliver programs that produce tangible business results. Organizations that get this need the kind of technology solutions that match this vision. Outdated and outmoded learning technology simply cannot keep up with the demands of the business.

Schoox has identified key areas where organizations have struggled with their Learning & Development approaches. We have highlighted these areas in this report, along with insights into how making a change to the right technology solution can put organizations in a better position to meet the needs of the future of work.



David Wentworth

Learning & Talent Development Platform Evangelist



Here's a preview of what you'll learn in this report:



Aligning Learning with the Business

How L&D can become a better business partner and make informed, insightful decisions about how learning should be developed and delivered.



Driving Performance Forward

How to stop thinking in terms of “learners” and “training” and focus on performance and development.



Empowering Stakeholders

How each role—employees, admins, managers, and business leaders—will interact with the technology and what it needs to do to empower them for success!



Putting People First

How addressing the question of “What’s in it for me?” can drive better outcomes by targeting specific skill, behavior, and performance needs.



Simplifying the Complex

How to choose learning technology that will grow and evolve along with the business, regardless of how complex it may become.

5 Challenges



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CHALLENGE 01

Aligning Learning with the Business

It seems obvious to imagine that every single thing an organization does is aligned with the goals of the business. Every strategy, process, and procedure should ostensibly be tied to what the business is trying to achieve. But this is often not the case, and Learning & Development is not immune. Learning is often conducted insularly in pursuit of isolated learning outcomes rather than business goals. The right learning technology can help synchronize an often chaotic, disjointed approach.

Business Alignment

The global pandemic showed many organizations how unprepared they were for real change. In its wake, organizations are looking to transform how they do things to make the business, its people, and its processes more adaptable, resilient, and future-proof.

For Learning & Development teams, this means a complete reassessment of the strategies, technologies, and competencies they leverage to build the skills the business needs. This is all occurring at a time when learning is being recognized as a critical strategic function for the business, whether it is upskilling or reskilling employees, building high-performance sales teams, or engaging customers.

At the same time, L&D teams are not completely sure they can deliver on the things the business will need. Many teams struggle with delivering and measuring engaging, impactful learning programs that can help the business today, let alone meet tomorrow's challenges. Given how important L&D is to the business, organizations need to recognize that learning is the catalyst for talent to confidently take on the future of work.



An August 2022 survey from McKinsey & Company showed that while 78%¹ of organizations report that capability building is important to their organization's long-term growth, only 30% report their programs often or always achieve organizational impact.

78%

The thing that is most often getting in the way of a successful learning strategy (beyond time) is an inability to adequately measure learning's impact on both individual and business performance. An August 2022 survey from McKinsey & Company showed that while **78%**¹ of organizations report that capability building is important to their organization's long-term growth, only **30%** report their programs often or always achieve organizational impact.

This indicates a recognition that measurement is not an endpoint for learning, where companies only need to report completion rates. It shows that measurement must be built into learning's DNA to evaluate its true impact. This helps L&D become a better business partner and also makes for informed, insightful decisions as to how learning should be developed and delivered.

This requires learning technology that can help companies track, evaluate, and analyze key performance indicators that demonstrate the impact that learning is having.



Matching Skills To Needs

To truly align with the business, learning must also be directly connected to the skills the organization needs to be successful.

In today's chaotic business and talent environments, organizations will not be able to hire their way out of their skills deficits. The future of work will require a host of new skills and higher-level skills distributed across the entire organization. Learning & Development teams must be prepared to deliver these skills rapidly and at scale. Unfortunately, many companies struggle to identify future skill needs, the gaps they will create, and how to properly address them.

Despite a lack of clarity on the future skills needs of the business, most organizations understand that to be successful, they need to do a better job of fostering and sustaining a more strategic set of skills at every employee level. To do this, companies need technology solutions that help manage existing and needed skills and deliver learning that can quickly close any gaps. This will require access to world-class content and a platform agile enough to deliver it so people can learn new and different things more quickly and flexibly.





CHALLENGE 02

Putting People First

The workforce has grown increasingly mobile, remote, specialized, and dispersed, and most learning organizations have struggled to keep up with these shifting dynamics. And employees' expectations for learning experiences have evolved. According to recent news from Gartner, Inc.², less than half (45%) of employees agree the learning their organization provides is relevant to them.

A new approach to learning that puts the learner first will help improve employee engagement and talent retention by providing the “What’s in it for me?” that has been missing from the learning experience. It will ultimately drive better outcomes by targeting specific skill, behavior, and performance needs.

Personalization is a critical part of driving learner adoption and engagement. This is especially true during an employee’s early days with the organization. Any training they receive during the onboarding period will set their perception of what learning will be like moving forward. If it’s a non-stop barrage of generic, boring compliance training, it can be next to impossible to generate enthusiasm for future learning programs.

If you can provide a connection to the learner from day one, it becomes easier to inspire and empower them from the start and continue as their careers grow and evolve. This is especially critical in fast-paced, high-turnover employee populations like retail and restaurant workers.



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Access to a broad and in-depth library of knowledge content is undoubtedly an advantage for learning leaders. But simply providing learners access to a massive amount of learning does not solve the challenge. A content library can be overwhelming without clear direction or navigation. The ability to continually curate the library to match each user's needs and interests keeps learners engaged and reduces time spent searching.

The right learning technology makes it easy for any employee to access what they need, when needed, in a modality that makes the most sense for them and their needs. That means the ability to deliver and track anything from in-person classes, eLearning modules, microlearning, games, and more. It also means native mobile apps that are seamless to use anytime, anywhere.



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CHALLENGE 03

Empowering Stakeholders

Because learning impacts or is impacted by every person in the organization, any solid learning strategy must include key players both inside and outside of an organization. Additionally, technology selection must take these stakeholders into account. These stakeholders will need to identify the requirements, use cases, and KPIs that are important to them, as well as the learning-related questions they would like to have answered. It's important to understand how each role will interact with the technology, and what it needs to do to empower them and make them successful.



- **Employees.** Learners want to be drawn into their learning. Leveraging technology to provide personalized, relevant experiences will drive engagement and outcomes. Ease of use is critical. Any part of the learning experience that creates friction will put a drag on engagement. Self-directed learning is a critical part of personalization, giving employees some autonomy in their learning journeys. This helps drive engagement and knowledge retention.
- **Admins.** Learning professionals want technology that is easy for them to use as well. However, it's critical to focus on the learner experience first and not choose a solution simply because it makes the admins' life easier. Data analytics tools are also critical to ensure admins know what's working and what isn't.
- **Managers.** All managers play a critical role in the learning experience. Make sure your learning technology takes their needs into account, providing timely data on progress, gaps, and areas of concern. The right solution will help managers with forecasting metrics that will help them understand who can take on more responsibilities over time.
- **Business leaders.** Business stakeholders want to know that the company's talent is in a certain state of organizational readiness and equipped with the skills required to meet their objectives. They also need a solid analysis of what gaps exist and how quickly they can be closed.



CHALLENGE 04

Driving Performance

The key thing L&D leaders must remember is that even the most engaging, modern, personalized learning experience is meaningless if it is not driving performance and behavior changes. All the smile sheets in the world won't matter if people cannot demonstrate new and improved knowledge and skills and put them into practice on the job. Similarly, 100% completion of compliance training is pointless if people aren't actually behaving the way they need to. All learning programs, from the most elaborate to even the most seemingly mundane, must be pointed to specific outcomes that learners should be able to understand, retain, and exhibit.

Connecting Learning and Performance

At its core, organizational learning should exist to improve the performance of the workforce and, thereby, the performance of the business. Yet, for many companies, there has been an increasing disconnect between learning and performance. Companies should rethink the learning experience to ensure everything is focused on driving performance, not on checking boxes. Identifying and understanding intended performance outcomes puts learning in a position to create programs that deliver results.

Oftentimes, learning programs are created at the behest of the business with no link to specific individual or organizational outcomes and are only measured against how many people complete the learning and how quickly. L&D teams lack insight into what the business needs from a goal and objective perspective, preventing them from creating and delivering learning programs that bring about the necessary behavior and performance outcomes.



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The lack of synergy impacts learners as they feel little to no connection with the learning they are given. It impacts the business because there's no guarantee the investment in learning will produce performance or behavior changes. If organizations want to demonstrate the larger impact of learning, they must strongly align their learning approaches — and the programs they produce — with business outcomes. Otherwise, learning will continue to operate in a vacuum. Understanding the needs of the business and incorporating them with the needs of learners will supercharge learning to drive organizational performance.

To improve business outcomes, learners should be expected to reach their own performance outcomes. These outcomes are based on specific behaviors that make the business outcomes possible. Organizations must be able to identify the specific behaviors or skills employees must exhibit to improve performance.

The right technology allows companies to identify and track these specific performance objectives and tie them to relevant learning experiences. L&D teams can simply push all the learning content to everyone and hope people get what they need. The technology has to create an environment of targeted, impactful learning.

Rethinking Compliance Training

Compliance training affects nearly every organization in the world. It covers a range of issues, from a run-through of the employee manual to training on critical life-or-death matters. Not only does it affect most companies, but it also touches just about every employee.

Yet, despite its reach and consequence, many organizations struggle with developing ways to make this training more engaging and strategic. In fact, as the rest of the L&D universe has gone through a rapid evolution to become more learner-centric, personal, and impactful; for the most part, compliance training remains static and traditional and is seen as a check-the-box necessary evil.





Simply making training compulsory is not enough to generate engagement and success. Learners must know why the training matters to the business and why it matters to them, their roles, and their daily work.

If organizations want to go beyond simply having people complete their compliance training, they must reimagine their approach. Learners must know the “what’s in it for me” factor of compliance training. Simply making training compulsory is not enough to generate engagement and success. Learners must know why the training matters to the business and why it matters to them, their roles, and their daily work.

Additionally, being able to filter out redundant or unnecessary material will help keep learners from being bored or frustrated by compliance training. Testing and assessments can help identify the training a learner does or doesn’t need. This approach goes a long way toward mitigating the rote, transactional feel of compliance training that can lead to sub-par results.

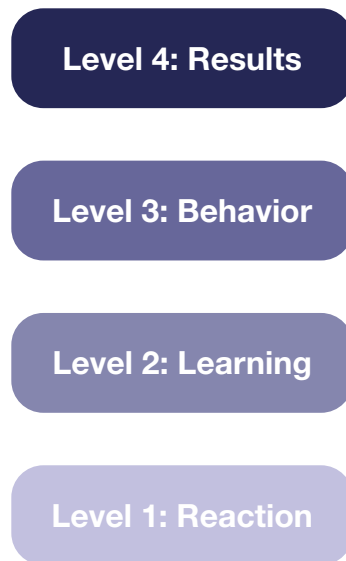
Compliance training has traditionally been one-dimensional, usually taking place via in-person, instructor-led environments. Much like other types of learning, though, compliance training becomes more engaging and effective when organizations leverage different modalities to fit the needs of learners and the material. This approach allows for a more continuous take on compliance training, making it more likely employees will continue to exhibit the proper skills and behaviors rather than relying on a one-time exercise.

The right learning technology will manage all of an organization’s core compliance training needs regarding standards and reporting, but it will also provide a wider variety of compliance training experiences, including mobile delivery. Reducing friction and improving accessibility increases a company’s ability to keep its workforce informed and in compliance.

Demonstrating Impact

Organizations invest time, money, and resources into delivering learning. Yet real insight into the impact that learning has on a company remains somewhat elusive. Most companies do a good job of tracking who has completed what training, but that isn't really telling the whole story, let alone helping determine the ROI of learning.

Because of the previously discussed lack of alignment between learning and business outcomes, few companies are effectively measuring their learning programs, at The Kirkpatrick Model⁹ Level 3, the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job, or Level 4, the degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training event and subsequent reinforcement.



The Kirkpatrick Model

Level 1: Reaction

The degree to which participants find the training favorable, engaging and relevant to their job.

Level 2: Learning

The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in training.

Level 3: Behavior

The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job.

Level 4: Results

The degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training and the support and accountability package

Source: Kirkpatrick Partners



CHALLENGE 05

Simplifying the Complex

Over the years, the ways in which organizations operate and are structured have evolved dramatically. There is not one “right way” anymore. Org structures have grown increasingly fluid and complex, and businesses operate across multiple brands, geographies, and time zones. This can strain the technologies that may have been put in place during a simpler time in a company’s history. This is often the result of selecting a technology while focused on solving an immediate problem or meeting past identified needs. If an organization wants to be successful, it must choose learning technology that will grow and evolve right along with the business, regardless of how complex it may become.

One of the most complex learning environments is the extended enterprise. For many organizations, learning audiences can go beyond internal employees and include customers, channel partners, distributors, resellers, franchisees, and more. With this added complexity comes opportunities for organizations to build their brand, improve customer relationships and generate revenue. Extended enterprise learning can have a direct impact on all of these outcomes and more, including improving brand recognition, improving sales effectiveness, and improving market capabilities. However, these external audiences are diverse, dispersed, and incredibly complex—and they don’t work for your company.

One of the biggest things that makes the extended enterprise environment so complex is that the relationships with these external groups are likely owned by a function in the organization other than L&D – sometimes multiple functions. Internally, L&D is typically responsible for all learners. In the extended enterprise, the relationships could be owned by multiple departments or divisions, each with its own



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approach, technology, and accountability. It is important that, as the experts on what makes for a good learning experience, the L&D team have at least input and some oversight into training-related communication with external audiences.

In a perfect world, L&D would be responsible for all learning, regardless of the audience. This is where the right technology becomes critical. Ensuring a standardized, consistent learning environment that simultaneously offers unique controls and experiences requires a powerful solution. Additionally, the learning audiences will be much more diverse in their learning needs than a completely internal audience. Customers are typically learning on their own, at their own pace. In a franchisee environment, many learners will be deskless and hourly, requiring unique learning approaches. In companies with multiple brands, each brand may need its own look and feel, along with some universally standard training.

Ultimately, organizations in these environments need technology that not only meets the needs of their internal employees but these vast networks of external SMEs, admins, and learners as well.



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Conclusion

The learning technology landscape has evolved dramatically in just a few short years. What was once a discrete grouping of Learning Management Systems and authoring tools has exploded into an expanding universe of platforms, solutions, and applications. Many organizations currently find themselves saddled with learning technology that was either hastily put in place as an immediate response to the pandemic or forced upon them by other parts of the business because of larger technology relationships.

In any case, there is a real need for change and the focus has to be on solutions that not only meet the challenges of yesterday and today but help put organizations in a position to be successful, no matter what the future brings. This will also require a technology provider that is invested in the organization's success as a partner and not just a vendor.

References

1. McKinsey & Company
2. Gartner, Inc.
3. Kirkpatrick Partners



About the Author

David Wentworth is the Vice President, Learning and Talent Development Platform Evangelist at Schoox.

David brings more than a decade of knowledge to Schoox, including a deep understanding of the workplace technology industry, with an emphasis on learning and development. In his role at Schoox, David engages with the L&D community on topics related to how to apply learning management and talent development technology to achieve business goals.

Prior to Schoox, David served as Principal Learning and Development Analyst for Brandon Hall Group, a leading HCM research and analyst firm. Before that, he was a Senior Research Analyst with Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). He is a regular speaker at talent management and HR industry events and has authored numerous articles in a variety of learning publications.



Connect with David Wentworth



About Schoox

Schoox is workplace learning software with a people-first twist. People aren't cogs, and Schoox was designed for how humans actually learn. We keep learners curious by letting you deliver more kinds of content wherever they are, from the front line to the corporate office. And by making learning easy, accessible, rewarding, and fun, we help you get everyone more excited about their career development. Learners can “up” their skills, grow on the job, and get more done—and you can measure the impact of their awesome accomplishments.

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