

# Developing Frontline Workers: Focus Where it Counts

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# Contents

- The problem behind the problems . . . . . 5
- 3 domains of frontline development . . . . . 6
- Balance is the new black. . . . . 7
- 1: Ensure your license to operate . . . . . 9
  - License-to-operate priorities . . . . . 10
  - Getting started . . . . . 16
- 2: Improve current performance. . . . . 19
  - Current performance priorities . . . . . 20
  - Getting started . . . . . 25
- 3: Prepare for the future . . . . . 28
  - Future readiness priorities . . . . . 29
  - Getting started . . . . . 34
- Wrapping up. . . . . 37
- About the authors. . . . . 38
- Methodology & contributors . . . . . 39

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## TL;DR



### Organizations invest in 3 domains of frontline development:

License to operate (what's required to keep the business running), current performance (what improves near-term performance), and future readiness (what builds the skills needed for the future).



### There's an imbalance across the 3 frontline development domains.

All 3 must be addressed—but in many organizations, frontline development is tipped too much toward license-to-operate efforts, leaving too little for other areas.



### To achieve better balance, leaders prioritize within each domain.

Specific goals and priorities within each domain help leaders direct resources in more balanced and effective ways.



### The goal for license-to-operate development: **Be an essentialist.**

Offer what's needed to meet the non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs.



### The goal for improving current performance: **Be a detective.**

Use data and input from across the business to find and fix the most pressing problems.



### The goal for future readiness: **Be a strategist.**

Build skills for what's next by aligning development with your organization's direction.



### **Focused action is key.**

Leaders prioritize specific actions in each of the 3 domains to achieve their goal for that domain—putting time, money, and energy where they'll count the most.



# The problem behind the problems

Things are moving fast. Geopolitical instability, economic shifts, and AI are forcing organizations to rethink how they operate—and what kinds of talent and skills they need. At the same time, the labor market is shrinking compared to the population, and there's a growing mismatch between the skills people have and the ones organizations are looking for. (For more context on these challenges, see our [2025 megatrends report](#).)

Frontline workers are feeling the effects of these shifts just like everyone else. They're keeping operations going, delivering services, and representing the brand—often under pressure and with limited support. While our [lit review](#) found growing recognition that investing in frontline workers is good for business, that recognition hasn't always led to focused, effective investment.

Most organizations are doing *something* for frontline worker development. Compliance and safety training are well-established in many cases. Some organizations are making bets on onboarding or career mobility. But across the board, L&D teams are being asked to do more with the same (or fewer) resources. The result is often a patchwork of programs that may check some boxes but don't necessarily add up to a coherent frontline development strategy.

This report is about making smarter choices with what you have.

It's not often feasible to do more across the board—the question is how to focus efforts and allocate limited resources to get the best outcomes for your organization and its frontline workers.



The big question: How can L&D **focus efforts** and **allocate limited resources** for frontline development?

## 3 domains of frontline development

When it comes to frontline development, the most effective organizations are focusing on 3 domains—and, as we'll discuss, they're prioritizing specific things within each domain. The 3 domains are:

- ➔ **License to operate:** What's required to keep the business running. This includes safety training, regulatory compliance, and basic job proficiency. This domain encompasses the foundational stuff that keeps the lights on and protects both workers and the organization.
- ➔ **Current performance:** What improves near-term business performance. This domain targets performance gaps and business priorities—the areas where development can quickly make a measurable difference.
- ➔ **Future readiness:** What builds skills the organization will need in the future. This domain focuses on growth and evolution: the skills and capabilities needed to keep up with tech, strategy or business shifts, and emerging opportunities.

Leaders emphasized that all 3 domains must be addressed—this isn't a pick-one-and-run menu. Many felt their organizations were imbalanced and underemphasized 1 or 2 of these domains. They sought to better balance efforts and resources across the 3.



# Balance is the new black

Practically speaking, there is a rough order to the 3 domains of frontline development: Keep the lights on, improve the work, plan for the future. That said, leaders emphasized that there should be balance across them—and right now, for many organizations, that balance is out of whack. For most of the leaders we talked to, frontline development in their organizations is tipped too much toward license-to-operate efforts, leaving too little time, budget, and other resources to invest in improving current performance or building skills for the future.

To be clear: License-to-operate development is critical. It must be done, and done well. But leaders told us again and again that it shouldn't be the only thing. Figure 1 depicts a few of the ways that leaders talked about this imbalance.

Leaders didn't suggest that the 3 domains should be exactly equal or each get 1/3 of the organization's frontline development resources. Instead, they recognize that there should be a balance that suits the organization's needs, strategy, and culture. But as you can see from some of the comments in Figure 1, there is frustration about where to put resources.

How are L&D leaders balancing the 3 domains? Interestingly, it often comes down to prioritizing *within* each domain. While this likely looks a bit different for every organization, patterns emerged. For example, leaders held similar goals within each of the 3 domains. There was also quite a bit of consensus on what priorities they had within each.

## Leaders see an imbalance across frontline development efforts

“Often the focus is on the present, on safety, quality, and efficiency, and doing really well in your role today. It's less about mobility development and what's your next role.”

“If we have a really static, compliance-driven approach to learning, then we're going to fall behind our competitors really, really, quickly.”

“It's very functional training, which is a big miss that we have. We're not developing them, really, in any other area.”

“We, as organizations, need to start taking care that we're preparing our people for the future, and that means more than just ensuring they're safely handling their work environment, or that they're compliant.”

“We're too busy mopping up to turn off the water.”

“I'd like frontline workers to have more focus on actual development, not just training for the job.”

“Skill development is framed less on a career progression level.”

Figure 1: Quotes from leaders indicating an imbalance in frontline development efforts | RedThread Research, 2025

Through a literature review, a roundtable, and structured interviews with over 20 leaders, we've identified a simple framework that can help L&D teams prioritize specific actions within each of the 3 domains—actions that can help them ensure they're allocating time, money, and energy where they'll count the most. That framework is shown in Figure 2.

To achieve better balance, leaders **focus on specific goals and priorities** within the license-to-operate, current performance, and future readiness domains

These goals and priorities help leaders better balance their frontline development efforts by streamlining license-to-operate training to free up resources for improving current performance and building future readiness. At the same time, they help ensure efforts on current performance and future readiness are as targeted and efficient as possible, to make the best use of those freed-up resources.

In the following sections, we address each frontline development domain in turn. We discuss leaders' goal for each domain, outline the actions they prioritize in service of that goal, and provide examples of real organizations doing it well. We also offer some guidance on how to get started.

### Prioritize specific actions in 3 domains of frontline development



License to operate

#### Goal: Be an essentialist.

Offer what's needed to meet the non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs.

#### Prioritize:

- Tightening up proficiency requirements
- Reducing inconsistency in training content
- Streamlining training logistics



Current performance

#### Goal: Be a detective.

Use data and input from across the business to find and fix the most pressing problems.

#### Prioritize:

- Filling critical skills gaps
- Helping solve high-cost problems
- Gathering intel from many stakeholders
- Coordinating efforts to tackle C-suite priorities



Future readiness

#### Goal: Be a strategist.

Build skills for what's next by aligning development to your organization's direction.

#### Prioritize:

- Developing capabilities that support the organization's big bets
- Building skills for tomorrow's tasks
- Supporting internal mobility

Figure 2: Priorities in each frontline development domain | RedThread Research, 2025



# 1: Ensure your license to operate

Ensuring your license to operate involves development opportunities that keep the business running by meeting legal, regulatory, or brand standards. It might include development covering:

- ➔ Workplace safety and risk mitigation
- ➔ Regulatory compliance
- ➔ Conduct and ethics
- ➔ Security & loss prevention
- ➔ Customer trust & brand representation
- ➔ Refreshers & reinforcement
- ➔ Basic competency development

Leaders in this study consistently placed these foundational efforts first: about 60% of the leaders we interviewed said outright that development related to compliance, safety, and basic job performance took first priority in their frontline development efforts. (Others appeared to assume similar logic but didn't state it outright.)

## Overview of license-to-operate goal and priorities




### Goal: Be an essentialist.

Offer what's needed to meet the non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs.

### Prioritize:

- ❖ Tightening up proficiency requirements
- ❖ Reducing inconsistency in training content
- ❖ Streamlining training logistics

Figure 3: Quick summary of license-to-operate goal and priorities | RedThread Research, 2025

**LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS**

Right-sizing license-to-operate development can **free up resources** like time, budget, and attention to be reallocated to other priorities

Meredith Wellard, former CLO at DHL Group, shared one reason this kind of foundational training is so important—to uphold the brand:

“If you don’t do the training that you need for your job, you don’t have the skills to do it as effectively, that has an impact on the customer. We have to have the best-trained people in order to be what we’ve promised our customers.”

— **MEREDITH WELLARD**, FORMER CLO, DHL GROUP

While license-to-operate development is seen as non-negotiable, leaders are actively looking for and experimenting with more efficient, smarter ways to enable it—ways that ensure the quality, compliance, and safety that are so essential, but that lighten the overall footprint of these efforts. Right-sizing this type of development—delivering what’s required, no more, no less—can free up resources like budget, time, and attention to be reallocated to other priorities.

## License-to-operate priorities

To meet the non-negotiable requirements—without hurting performance—leaders prioritize a small set of focused actions. In this section, we’ll review 3 of the most common priorities, along with some real-world examples of how they put them into practice.

Leaders prioritize:

- ➔ Tightening up mandatory training
- ➔ Reducing inconsistency in training
- ➔ Streamlining training logistics

Obviously, these aren’t one-size-fits-all solutions, nor are they the only things to prioritize. And as you go through the examples below, you’ll notice that different organizations have very different ways of implementing these priorities. But they’re a great starting point, with specific actions that can be tailored to your context and needs.

**LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS****Tighten up proficiency requirements**

Many leaders we spoke with are focused on redefining what's essential and designing development to reflect that.

In essence, they described a shift in mindset: moving away from overloaded compliance programs or “just in case” onboarding and toward development with a sharper focus on what frontline workers actually need to do their jobs safely and



Leaders described a **shift in mindset**: a sharper focus on what's needed to **do the job** safely and effectively

effectively. Rather than trying to make compliance training more engaging by adding bells and whistles or frontloading every possible piece of knowledge during onboarding, they aim for clarity and precision.

This means identifying the skills and optimal level of proficiency required for each frontline role and building development around that foundation.

The goal is to ensure each hour spent on training has a clear, necessary purpose. Leaders emphasized that foundational proficiency should be achieved as efficiently as possible so employees can start contributing quickly and safely—while additional development is provided within daily work, as needed.



**LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS**

Leaders described how they:

- ➞ Identify baseline skills and proficiency requirements for frontline roles
- ➞ Focus training on helping employees meet those standards
- ➞ Put systems in place to track and verify essential skills

At Sheridan, a midsized printing company, for example, it historically took 3 to 6 years for machine operators to reach full proficiency. But with high turnover and persistent labor shortages, that timeline was not sustainable. Joe Dunlap, the L&D lead at Sheridan's parent company, decided to shorten up-front development to bring operators to "make-ready" status, which he described as:

**"You don't know everything, but you are proficient enough to meet performance expectations."**

– **JOE DUNLAP**, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT, CJK GROUP

Working with plant managers, Dunlap defined the core skill set required to get operators started—such as "can set up [equipment name] with 90% precision in under 10 minutes." These standards became the foundation of Sheridan's license-to-operate training. To support ongoing development, they introduced "hip-pocket cards," expanded SOPs, and floating mentors—experienced operators who provide real-time coaching during shifts.

Several other leaders echoed Sheridan's approach—reducing up-front or off-the-floor training where possible and embedding targeted development into the

natural rhythm of work. Ongoing development takes many forms, including peer mentors, job aids, standard operating procedures, and microlearning modules delivered in small, timely doses.

To support this shift, especially in manufacturing and other highly regulated environments, many leaders mentioned they rely on robust skills tracking and verification. These systems help to ensure compliance, assign work appropriately, and ensure frontline workers receive the foundational development they need as efficiently as possible. While some organizations are managing this with spreadsheets, others are using technology to make the process faster and more reliable (For more information, check out our research on [skills verification](#) and [skills tech](#).)



**LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS****Reduce inconsistency in training content**

Several leaders—particularly those in organizations that depend on job shadowing or manager-led instruction for mandatory or foundational training—highlighted a key challenge in frontline development: inconsistency. With hundreds or even thousands of managers and subject matter experts delivering training, it's difficult to ensure that every frontline worker receives the same critical information, experiences, and opportunities to practice.

To address this, these teams are taking steps to create more consistency in what is covered during license-to-operate training, while still accounting for variations in individual and local needs. Their approaches include:

- ➞ Creating content centrally
- ➞ Providing guidelines for local delivery
- ➞ Issuing checklists for content to be covered
- ➞ Developing skill frameworks to determine the content needed for a given role

For example, women's healthcare organization Tia relies on job shadowing to onboard new clinic hires. This approach fosters human connection and real-world learning but poses two challenges: a lack of consistent standards that leads to uneven onboarding quality, and significant demands on experienced workers responsible for training new hires.

To address these challenges, Quigley created consistent documentation (SOPs, e-learning) and other development opportunities (such as mock scenarios and job shadowing checklists) that increased consistency and reduced the burden on trainers. Quigley described these shifts:

**"Onboarding used to depend on whoever happened to be training and whatever happened in the clinic. You could shadow for 2 weeks and some scenarios would never come up. Now, we're very intentional about how that live shadowing time is spent."**

– **MAREN QUIGLEY**, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT, TIA

Tia's new approach ensures every new clinic employee hits the critical basics while still benefiting from in-person practice. Similarly, a telecom infrastructure provider is standardizing safety and operational skill requirements for each role. New employees will study standard materials, then meet with subject matter experts for Q&A, skills checks, and final sign-off. This approach is designed to give managers confidence in employee readiness and shorten time to proficiency, delivering measurable value to the business.

By creating standardized materials and requirements that help ensure training is delivered consistently, organizations reduce variability, which streamlines the training experience and protects the organization.

## LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS

### Streamline training logistics

When we asked leaders about the biggest challenges associated with frontline development, scheduling and time for development were at the top of the list.

Several leaders described efforts to improve the logistics of license-to-operate training to make it less disruptive to day-to-day operations. These efforts help them ensure frontline workers meet core requirements while minimizing any negative impacts on key performance metrics. Solutions vary by team and location; approaches include:

- ➔ Consolidating mandatory training content into chunks
- ➔ Scheduling training to minimize interference with business operations (e.g., training days / weeks; fitting small chunks into downtime)
- ➔ Giving more notice about upcoming training
- ➔ Leveraging frontline tech to make training more efficient

At mining and metals firm Rio Tinto, for example, safety and regulatory compliance training varied from between a few hours per year in some locations to over 100 hours in others. This prompted Rio Tinto's central L&D function to try to make training more efficient.



To handle **scheduling & time constraints**, organizations streamline training logistics in different ways

After speaking with senior operational leaders across the company, L&D leader Tom Craig reflected:

"It's not about chopping all training in half. Our senior operational leaders are happy to invest in training and learning because we get that it's important. It keeps our people safe, productive, and engaged. But productive time spent on training has a huge dollar value to it. How do we do it smarter?"

– **TOM CRAIG**, SR. MANAGER GLOBAL LEARNING & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, RIO TINTO

To address this, Rio Tinto plans to group mandatory training into chunks and schedule it during less disruptive times—for example, setting aside dedicated training days to complete requirements all at once. They also plan to introduce guidelines on how much time teams should spend on mandatory training versus other development efforts.

Other leaders note that even simple steps—like giving frontline workers and their managers plenty of notice about upcoming training—can make a difference.

## LICENSE-TO-OPERATE | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS

Advanced planning allows managers and employees to set aside time and reduce last-minute disruptions.

Some leaders are also turning to frontline tech to reduce the operational burden of license-to-operate development. In [our 2023 study](#), we identified over 100 vendors focused specifically on frontline tech—and that number continues to grow. These tools are built with frontline realities in mind: limited time, variable schedules, and the need for quick, just-in-time support. Frontline tech can help streamline license-to-operate training with functionalities like:

- ➔ Microlearning / bite-size learning
- ➔ Digital job aids, work instructions, or quick-reference guides
- ➔ Tools that answer specific questions using company data
- ➔ Skills tracking and verification
- ➔ Augmented / virtual reality practice
- ➔ AI-powered coaches

In organizations where every hour of frontline time matters, license-to-operate training can't be an afterthought—but it also can't be a burden. Leaders who use the logistics of training as a strategic lever, not a hurdle, are finding ways to meet regulatory and safety requirements while protecting productivity.

Underpinning this range of ideas are some key similarities, including a mindset that questions what's truly needed for frontline workers to develop specific skills. Prioritizing just-in-time, just-what's-needed development can help L&D functions free time, budget, and other resources to enable other types of development.





**LICENSE-TO-OPERATE** | GOAL: OFFER WHAT'S NEEDED WITHOUT IMPACTING KPIS**Getting started: License-to-operate priorities**

This section is structured as a series of tables with questions to ask, options to consider, and data to look at for the 3 priorities within license-to-operate development. They roll up to the goal of this domain: meeting non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs. They aren't meant to be a to-do list, but to prompt conversations about the actions that might be most appropriate for your organization.

**Focusing on 3 priorities** can help meet non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs







Domain: License-to-operate development

Goal: Be an essentialist. Offer what’s needed to meet the non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs

Priority: Tighten up proficiency requirements

*What’s truly essential for workers to do their jobs safely and effectively?*

Questions to ask:

- ➔ What’s the true threshold for the skills frontline workers need to safely and effectively do their work?
- ➔ Does each hour spent on training have a clear, necessary purpose?
- ➔ What training must be done to ensure minimum proficiency vs. can be done on the job?
- ➔ Where might quality skills data help us quickly see what essential training is required by whom and when?

Options to consider:

- ➔ Define essential skills and proficiency levels by role
- ➔ Trim mandatory training to essentials; shift content into the flow of work where possible
- ➔ Use job aids and mentors for real-time support
- ➔ Track sign-offs / proficiency with simple tools

Look at data like:

- ➔ Skills required for each role
- ➔ Required certifications
- ➔ Time to proficiency
- ➔ Operational data related to essential requirements / standards

Figure 4: Getting started on tightening proficiency requirements | RedThread Research, 2025

Priority: Reduce inconsistency in training content

*Where could more consistency save resources and / or reduce risk?*

Questions to ask:

- ➔ Where is inconsistent content costing time or money?
- ➔ Where is inconsistent content creating a risk that workers cannot meet essential requirements?
- ➔ How well equipped are local teams to deliver training consistently but contextually?

Options to consider:

- ➔ Use essential skill requirements to determine the training content needed for each role
- ➔ Standardize critical content (e.g., SOPs, job aids, reference materials)
- ➔ Use standard checklists for onboarding / training
- ➔ Define what must be consistent vs. should flex locally

Look at data like:

- ➔ Essential skills for each frontline role
- ➔ Variation in worker proficiency or time to proficiency across similar roles
- ➔ Inconsistent worker outcomes
- ➔ Manager / trainer feedback

Figure 5: Getting started on reducing inconsistency in training content | RedThread Research, 2025



Domain: License-to-operate development

Goal: **Be an essentialist.** Offer what’s needed to meet the non-negotiables without negatively impacting KPIs

Priority: Streamline training logistics

*How can we design training to disrupt business as little as possible?*

Questions to ask:

- ➔ When does training disrupt work the most?
- ➔ What scheduling options might reduce disruption?
- ➔ Do workers / managers get enough advance notice about upcoming training?
- ➔ Where might technology help save time without reducing quality?
- ➔ Are we coordinating across teams to avoid overload or scheduling conflicts?

Options to consider:

- ➔ Use training blocks or short sessions based on fit
- ➔ Use worker downtime strategically
- ➔ Give advance notice for training time
- ➔ Coordinate schedules across teams
- ➔ Set guidance for required training time
- ➔ Consider tools like microlearning, skills platforms, or AI coaches, and ensure they integrate well with current systems

Look at data like:

- ➔ Time spent on license-to-operate training
- ➔ Missed training windows / incomplete training
- ➔ Overtime spikes related to training
- ➔ Worker sentiment related to training



Figure 6: Getting started on streamlining training logistics | RedThread Research, 2025

## 2: Improve current performance

This domain, improving current performance, focuses on solving near-term business problems—areas where frontline development can have an immediate, measurable impact. Leaders we spoke with emphasized the importance of targeting development efforts where they would deliver the greatest value. In their words, the goal was to “find the biggest bang for the buck”—and avoid spreading learning efforts too thin.

This domain often focuses on:

- ➔ Improving onboarding to reduce early turnover
- ➔ Offering targeted development to close skills gaps
- ➔ Cross-training workers to reduce downtime or fill scheduling gaps
- ➔ Using buddies or on-the-job trainers to support new employees
- ➔ Providing job aids, SOPs, or other quick-reference tools
- ➔ Equipping frontline supervisors to better support their teams

While L&D teams are often flooded with urgent requests, not all requests are equal. Leaders who appear to be most effective in this space approach their work like detectives—gathering evidence, digging into data, and collaborating across functions to understand what is really driving poor performance or unnecessary cost.

### Overview of current performance goal and priorities



Figure 7: Quick summary of current performance goal and priorities | RedThread Research, 2025

## CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

By focusing on specific performance challenges—like high turnover in key roles, frequent errors on certain shifts, or new customer demands—L&D functions can direct development resources where they'll have the biggest impact. This helps position development not as a reactive service but as a strategic lever for real operational improvement. It also frees up capacity to invest in what's next.



Focusing on specific business challenges can help direct resources where they'll have the **biggest bang for the buck**

## Current performance priorities

To make best use of limited resources, leaders tend to prioritize a few key things that help ensure they are identifying and addressing the most pressing business challenges:

- ➔ Closing critical skills gaps
- ➔ Helping solve high-cost problems
- ➔ Gathering intel from many stakeholders
- ➔ Coordinating efforts to tackle C-suite priorities

These priorities help leaders focus on what will make the greatest difference for their organizations. This section elaborates on those priorities, including examples from our interviews that show how they played out in practice.



## CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

### Close critical skills gaps

Because frontline work is typically closely tied to operational metrics, leaders can use operational data to pinpoint where frontline skill gaps seem to be causing operational or organizational performance problems.

Critical skills gaps might be indicated by any number of data points. A few that leaders mentioned are:

- ➞ Poor customer feedback, low satisfaction, low intent to return
- ➞ Not meeting sales targets
- ➞ Low production quality or efficiency metrics
- ➞ Slower task completion times
- ➞ Machine downtime
- ➞ Elevated error, scrap, or rework rates
- ➞ Missed deadlines
- ➞ Turnover spikes (e.g., in specific locations, shifts, or roles)
- ➞ Skills assessments / observations that indicate standards aren't being met
- ➞ Manager or supervisor coaching / feedback

We found that leaders are focusing frontline development on building skills where key metrics point to the greatest need.

In some cases, new high-priority tasks exposed skill gaps—suddenly requiring employees to do things they hadn't needed to do before.

In one example, as online and app-based ordering becomes commonplace workers at quick-service restaurants are dealing with more customer-facing complexity than they used to. At one restaurant, the L&D team counted 9 ways customers can place orders, each requiring different staging (tray, to-go bag, delivery bag, etc.). Because digital ordering is a top priority tied to key KPIs, the team is updating frontline training to ensure each shift has employees who can handle these orders well. A senior training leader explained:

**“We’re really leaning into how our crew members support a positive digital experience. If someone’s struggling with the mobile app, we want to make sure we have a subject matter expert in the crew who can help.”**

– **VP of RESTAURANT & TRAINING CURRICULUM**, GLOBAL QUICK-SERVICE RESTAURANT

Ultimately, closing critical frontline skill gaps is about using data to target frontline development where it will move the needle most. By zeroing in on the skills that directly affect key metrics, L&D teams can ensure their efforts are relevant and high-impact.

**CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS****Focus on high-cost problems**

Several leaders said they prioritize frontline development that helps save the organization money. To find these opportunities, they dig into employee and operational data, sometimes questioning initial assumptions to find the root causes of high costs.

For example, at the community-based financial institution Royal Credit Union high frontline turnover in one metro area was initially blamed on the local job market. But when the L&D team dug into the data, they found a different cause. L&D leader Jeff Labs told us:

**“We started digging into the data because a couple of branches had near 100% turnover. Exit interviews and conversations with people in the region showed new hires got classroom training but very little on-the-job support afterward. That caused high stress and low confidence—and people left.”**

– **JEFF LABS**, ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, ROYAL CREDIT UNION

To fix this, the L&D team worked with the operations function to redeploy their Member Experience Ambassador team (6 individuals who had been filling in to cover vacant shifts) to be certified on-the-job trainers. They redesigned training so these experts spent 3 weeks with each new hire, reinforcing skills on the job. A buddy system and better manager guidance added ongoing support.

Though leaders worried about the inefficiency of this approach, the credit union used existing roles (no net new hires) for the on-the-job trainers and justified other costs by comparing them to the cost of turnover. After the new approach took hold, average turnover in that region dipped from 24.5% to 15.6%. Even more encouraging, frontline workers reported feeling more confident in their roles, and many started seeking out additional career development.

Similarly, at diversified hospitality company Westgate Resorts, the head of L&D saw how much the company was spending on hiring and noted:

**“It costs a lot less to train people internally than to hire from the external side.”**

– **STEPHANIE KETRON**, DIRECTOR OF L&D, WESTGATE RESORTS

External hiring was especially high in the engineering and maintenance department, partly due to a lack of clear development or career paths for engineers. To solve this, L&D leaders streamlined over 100 engineering job titles, identified essential skills for each role, and built a tiered curriculum (levels 1, 2, and 3). Engineering staff now see paths for themselves within the organization.

After success in engineering, Westgate is applying the same approach to other areas, aiming to reduce costs by growing talent from within.

By questioning assumptions, leveraging data, and creatively using existing resources, L&D can ensure frontline development resources are well invested to target the root causes of high-cost business problems.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

Gather intel from many stakeholders

Several leaders noted that to find the really critical business needs, L&D functions cannot simply react to the squeakiest wheels or the most recent requests—nor can they operate in a silo. They need intel from different stakeholders across the business to pinpoint where resources are, in fact, most needed, and relationships with these stakeholders are critical to success.

The stakeholders that leaders mentioned include:

- ➔ Senior leaders
- ➔ Operational leaders
- ➔ Frontline managers
- ➔ Frontline workers
- ➔ HR leaders & partners
- ➔ On-the-ground trainers / mentors

Leaders use a variety of methods to gather stakeholder input, such as:

- ➔ Informal conversations
- ➔ Steering committees
- ➔ Workshops
- ➔ Governance forums
- ➔ Focus groups
- ➔ Shadowing / visiting frontline workers
- ➔ Formal needs analyses

Several leaders have formalized cross-functional groups to help identify the business challenges where frontline development might make a difference.

For example, the L&D team at Marriott International has robust discussions with stakeholder groups about where funding should be directed to have the most impact. Marriott’s head of talent acquisition and employee development, Jessica Lee, said:

“We have a very strong culture of steering committees who give input on priorities and help ensure alignment and accountability across our brands and departments.”

—JESSICA LEE, GLOBAL OFFICER FOR TALENT ACQUISITION AND ASSOCIATE DEVELOPMENT, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

Leaders find cross-functional forums valuable not just for gathering input, but for helping stakeholders understand where resources are going, why it matters, and how efforts align with overall strategy. More broadly, gathering intel from a range of stakeholders can surface patterns that might otherwise be dismissed as isolated problems, and they give L&D critical context—helping them pinpoint not just where development is needed, but why.

**CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS****Coordinate efforts to tackle C-suite priorities**

One way to identify pressing business needs is to simply look at what the C-suite cares about most. The challenge here often isn't identifying what needs attention—it's addressing it cohesively. Without cross-functional coordination, teams can risk duplicating work or taking conflicting approaches. Strong stakeholder relationships help ensure consistency and alignment.

For example, at Kohler, a manufacturer of kitchen and bath solutions, senior leadership saw an opportunity to reduce new-hire turnover (and its associated costs), enhance workers' experience, and strengthen engagement. L&D leader Hallie Winter partnered with HR and plant leaders to identify and address the root causes—which largely focused on inconsistent standards and lack of cross-functional coordination. Through this collaboration, she uncovered key opportunities for improvement:

**"Digital manufacturing, continuous improvement, safety—those are the places where training happens today, but it's not connected. And the people doing new hire orientation and onboarding in the different plants didn't know one another well, so they couldn't help each other."**

—**HALLIE WINTER**, DIRECTOR OF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT, PLANT OPERATIONS, KOHLER

To fix this, Winter is creating a governance & tech steering committee, a frontline people development committee, and a community of practice for onboarding facilitators. Kohler also launched local "Workplace Experience (WE) Teams" of

manufacturing associates to tackle problems on the ground. Connecting these groups helps build a more cohesive approach to reducing new-hire turnover.

Building relationships to align efforts across functions to address C-suite priorities can help ensure resources actually do have the biggest bang for the buck.





## CURRENT PERFORMANCE | GOAL: FIND & FIX PRESSING BUSINESS PROBLEMS

Two themes stood out across the examples of how leaders find and help fix critical business problems:

- ➞ **Data.** More than in the other domains of frontline development, leaders in this space rely heavily on both qualitative and quantitative data to surface real needs—such as the root causes of costly turnover (a top issue for about ¼ of the leaders we interviewed) or skill gaps that are disrupting operations. They draw on a wide range of inputs, including KPIs, workforce data, operational metrics, customer insights, and competitive intelligence.
- ➞ **Relationships.** Leaders emphasized that L&D can't address business-critical problems in isolation. Strong cross-functional relationships supported by clear and consistent communication are essential for spotting issues early, ensuring buy-in from the right people, and designing effective solutions.

Underlying both themes is a detective-like mindset: a deliberate, data-informed approach combined with strong organizational awareness. Leaders zoom in on the problems that matter most and identify where frontline development can help. Such a targeted, scalpel-like approach ensures L&D resources are used where they'll have the most impact—and reinforces L&D's role as a direct contributor to the organization's bottom line.

## Getting started

The following tables summarize the 4 priorities that leaders focus on to find and fix pressing business problems by leveraging frontline development. For each priority, we list a few key questions to ask, options to consider, and data to look at. These are meant to spark conversations about where and how to direct frontline development resources in your organization to get the most bang for your buck.



**Data & relationships** are keys to identifying and addressing the organization's top business challenges



Domain: Current performance

Goal: **Be a detective.** Use data and input from across the business to find and fix the most pressing problems

Priority: Close critical skill gaps

*Are we confident that we’re addressing the most critical gaps?*

**Questions to ask:**

- ➔ What key metrics need the most improvement in our organization?
- ➔ What frontline tasks & skills most contribute to those metrics?
- ➔ How can we better pinpoint critical skill gaps? (What data / input do we need?)
- ➔ How can we ensure that as new skill gaps emerge, we can quickly respond with targeted development?

**Options to consider:**

- ➔ Use qualitative and quantitative data to identify urgent frontline skill gaps
- ➔ Ensure workers are receiving targeted development (e.g., mentoring, coaching, job aids)
- ➔ Equip frontline workers to solve daily issues and share fixes

**Look at data like:**

- ➔ Organizational KPIs
- ➔ Operational metrics (e.g., cycle time, error rates)
- ➔ Customer feedback / sentiment
- ➔ Worker skills / certification data
- ➔ Turnover spikes (as signals of training gaps)

Figure 8: Getting started on closing critical skill gaps | RedThread Research, 2025

Priority: Focus on high-cost problems

*What are our high-cost business problems, and how can frontline development help?*

**Questions to ask:**

- ➔ What data (e.g., sales, costs, errors) give insight into the highest-cost areas?
- ➔ How might frontline development help reduce those costs?
- ➔ Are we solving the root causes or reacting to symptoms?
- ➔ How will we calculate savings?

**Options to consider:**

- ➔ Use performance and cost data to identify key pressure points
- ➔ Reallocate (not add) L&D resources to address big pain points
- ➔ Secure budget by quantifying the savings that frontline development might offer

**Look at data like:**

- ➔ Costs of errors (scrap / rework, safety incidents, etc.)
- ➔ Costs of lost sales / lost customer intent to return
- ➔ Costs of turnover / onboarding / hiring externally
- ➔ Costs of slow time to proficiency / productivity

Figure 9: Getting started on focusing on high-cost problems | RedThread Research, 2025



Domain: Current performance

Goal: Be a detective. Use data and input from across the business to find and fix the most pressing problems

Priority: Gather intel from many stakeholders

*How can we ensure we're targeting critical gaps and not just squeaky wheels?*

Questions to ask:

- ➔ Who should weigh in on top priorities?
- ➔ Are we getting input from leaders, managers, frontline workers, and HR/L&D partners?
- ➔ Could better communication cut "side requests" and confusion?

Options to consider:

- ➔ Gather representatives from across the organization to give input on top priorities
- ➔ Involve / shadow frontline workers & leaders to diagnose and interpret problems in context
- ➔ Conduct listening sessions or lightweight surveys
- ➔ Tap into frontline worker suggestions and manager reports

Look at data like:

- ➔ Feedback from stakeholders
- ➔ Patterns in worker suggestions / surveys
- ➔ Training requests (look across all requests)
- ➔ Worker feedback (e.g., engagement surveys, exit surveys)

Figure 10: Getting started on gathering intel from many stakeholders | RedThread Research, 2025

Priority: Coordinate efforts to tackle C-Suite priorities

*How do we ensure frontline development syncs with other efforts to support top-down priorities?*

Questions to ask:

- ➔ How does frontline development currently support C-suite priorities?
- ➔ Who else is working on those same priorities, and how will we work with them?
- ➔ How will we maintain alignment across functions?

Options to consider:

- ➔ Establish steering committees / project teams to share info, ideas, and resources on projects of mutual interest
- ➔ Develop processes / governance to stay aligned as work gets done
- ➔ Share data to help stakeholders compare potential frontline investments

Look at data like:

- ➔ Executive dashboards or KPIs
- ➔ Project plans / documentation for major strategic initiatives (and who's involved in them)
- ➔ Internal communications / meeting summaries
- ➔ Talent or workforce strategies related to C-Suite priorities
- ➔ Budgets / funding streams for C-suite priorities

Figure 11: Getting started on coordinating efforts to tackle C-Suite priorities | RedThread Research, 2025

### 3: Prepare for the future

Building future readiness means helping frontline workers develop the skills your organization is going to need next. This type of development often takes a backseat to more urgent demands, but it's also often the key to long-term success, talent retention, and strategic workforce planning.

Common efforts in this domain include:

- ➔ Identifying mission-critical or organization-wide skills
- ➔ Creating development paths into mission-critical roles
- ➔ Building skill and career frameworks
- ➔ Certifying emerging or critical future skills
- ➔ Offering coaching for career mobility
- ➔ Embedding opportunities to practice emerging skills

Several of the leaders we spoke with had identified key future roles and skills and built structured development pathways to help workers develop those skills. Others are piloting future-focused development in one high-need area before scaling up. What they have in common is a strategic focus on building critical skills in targeted ways.

#### Overview of future readiness goal and priorities



Figure 12: Quick summary of future readiness goal and priorities | RedThread Research, 2025



## FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION

Despite growing evidence that this kind of development boosts retention, engagement, and performance (see our [lit review](#)), it's often under-resourced. In fact, 2 separate studies—[this one](#) by BCG and [this one](#) by McKinsey (specific to frontline retail)—both found that 41% of frontline workers say a lack of career development or advancement opportunities is a reason they might leave their jobs. But not one leader we interviewed said that their organization was over-investing in future readiness. Most admitted it's the first to be cut when times are tight.

This means focus is essential. Rather than offering many options, leaders who are making progress in this space are very intentional. They start by clarifying the business's direction, identifying the frontline roles and skills that may be most impacted, and then targeting their development efforts accordingly.

This isn't just the right thing for the business and for frontline workers. Our recent [research on L&D Strategy](#) shows that L&D functions have lost ground in high-level conversations. A clear, strategic approach to building future frontline skills can help L&D regain, or keep, that seat at the table—connecting frontline workforce growth with business growth in a tangible, visible way.



A clear, strategic approach to building future frontline skills can help L&D regain, or keep, their **seat at the table**

### Future readiness priorities

To help frontline workers develop skills that align with their organizations' direction, leaders prioritize:

- ➔ Developing capabilities that support the organization's big bets
- ➔ Building skills for tomorrow's tasks
- ➔ Supporting internal mobility

Prioritizing actions that identify and build the skills your organization will need helps ensure you're making the most of the limited resources available for this domain. In the following sections, we explore each priority in more detail.

**FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION****Develop capabilities that support the organization's big bets**

One way leaders build future-focused skills is by aligning workforce planning and development with the organization's growth goals or big strategic bets. Leaders mentioned aligning to:

- ➔ New strategic directions or products
- ➔ Expected big contracts or new business
- ➔ The organization's audacious, longer-term goals ("breakthrough goals")
- ➔ Organizational right-sizing

For instance, Quanta Services, Inc., an infrastructure EPC contractor, has set ambitious revenue goals tied to securing large-scale contracts. These projects require a workforce with specialized certifications, such as project management, engineering, and advanced technical credentials. To ensure the organization has the right skills to take on these opportunities, Quanta has developed tailored learning journeys and development paths that help frontline project professionals earn the necessary certifications.



## FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION

If the organization has identified enterprise-wide skills that are critical to the business strategy, including frontline workers in these efforts can be not only helpful but essential. (Leaders pointed out that this inclusion is not necessarily a given in some organizations.)

For example, telecommunications giant Ericsson annually conducts skill sensing to define a 'vital few' set of Global Critical Skills. These are the skills that Ericsson feels are most vital for speed, scale, and accountability to drive profitable business growth.

Ericsson's frontline workers are intentional about opting in to build their Global Critical Skills. They proactively participate in development opportunities related to the Global Critical Skills and achieve the credentials associated with those skills. Ericsson's CLO, Vidya Krishnan, remarked:

**"Skills are like a passport: Maybe one day a frontline worker will want to do something else, something new, and the fact that they have gone and acquired the credentials and these global skills opens up their options."**

—VIDYA KRISHNAN, CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER, ERICSSON

Frontline workers who acquire skills that align with the organization's big bets can position themselves to become key internal talent. They can pivot into different roles as priorities and product lines evolve, supporting both their own career growth and the organization's strategic roadmap.

## Build skills for tomorrow's tasks

In most industries, automation, digitization, and AI are reshaping frontline work, introducing tasks that require different skills. Leaders described how they're looking at the specific tasks frontline workers perform and identifying how those tasks may change, so they can focus on enabling workers to develop the skills they'll need to perform future tasks.

Leaders draw on a range of sources to understand how frontline tasks might be changing, including:

- ➞ Tech advancements / automations
- ➞ Forecasted changes to operations (processes, etc.)
- ➞ Workforce and skills data
- ➞ Insights from frontline workers
- ➞ Input from frontline managers and operational leaders
- ➞ External research / industry trends data

At one global life sciences company, for example, tech-driven changes in production are reshaping skill needs. In another example, researchers at Cornell University examined how the introduction of self-checkout kiosks in grocery stores changed the tasks—and, therefore, the skills—that cashiers needed. Cashiers overseeing self-checkout lanes needed stronger skills in multitasking, problem-solving, customer service, and conflict resolution.



**FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION**

Some of the leaders we spoke with named the following skills as ones their frontline workforces will need in the future:

- ➔ Digital and technical proficiency
- ➔ Communication
- ➔ Problem-solving
- ➔ Conflict resolution / negotiation
- ➔ Adaptability
- ➔ Business & financial acumen (mostly for frontline supervisors)
- ➔ Languages (e.g., English, to boost workers' global mobility)

Several leaders are planning development initiatives to prepare frontline workers with these skills. It's worth noting that many of the skills leaders highlighted—such as adaptability, conflict resolution, and nuanced communication—are uniquely human. As automation and other technologies reshape frontline roles, developing these capabilities can better prepare both workers and organizations for whatever the future of work brings. It's also important to identify which skills are becoming obsolete and may no longer warrant significant development investment.

More broadly, keeping a close watch on how frontline work is evolving enables L&D leaders to anticipate future skill needs and design development efforts that stay ahead of the curve.





## FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION

### Support internal mobility

Leaders described how boosting internal mobility can help the organization and its workers be more flexible in the future: internal mobility is one way for organizations to staff critical roles, projects, or other efforts quickly and adapt more agilely to market changes.

For the frontline workforce, supporting internal mobility often starts with making opportunities more visible: leaders stressed that many frontline workers can see the paths their managers or site leaders take but may not see or be aware of opportunities that are cross-functional, lateral, or less common.

Some ways that leaders make career and mobility opportunities more visible to frontline workers include:

- ➔ Creating standard job and skill frameworks
- ➔ Mapping career paths that frontline workers might take
- ➔ Leveraging technology to enable personalized career paths
- ➔ Communicating mobility opportunities in many ways (written, verbal, etc.)
- ➔ Spotlighting different individuals' career paths

Several leaders are focusing on creating standardized job and skill frameworks—these efforts are a first step toward boosting internal mobility by making transferable skills more obvious.

For example, one energy tech company has built career frameworks for its manufacturing workforce to make it easier for employees with similar skills to move across segments and divisions. This is particularly helpful given the cyclical nature of the oil and gas industry, where demand may spike in one region as it slows in another. An L&D leader described his vision:

**“We want to develop people to be energy professionals in globally applicable roles by discipline—not local experts with no identified transferrable skills. The more we have our frontline personnel with rounded, multidisciplinary skills, the easier it’ll be to move people across.”**

— **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**, TRAINING & COMPETENCY, GLOBAL ENERGY TECHNOLOGY COMPANY

In addition, several leaders said they are focusing on creating clearer career paths for frontline workers. These paths help employees see how they can grow within the organization—aligning their interests and aspirations with opportunities within the organization and with the business' needs.

Others emphasized rotations and cross-skilling to give workers a taste of other jobs while meeting more immediate staffing challenges, like covering shifts or supporting project work. These types of things not only address short-term gaps but also expand worker capabilities, giving them more options in the future. For more on internal mobility, see our report, [\*Career Mobility: Mindset over Movement\*](#).

## FUTURE READINESS | GOAL: ALIGN DEVELOPMENT TO YOUR ORG'S DIRECTION

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Future-focused development doesn't always get the attention it deserves—but it's where many L&D leaders see the biggest long-term payoff. The ones making progress aren't trying to cover everything. Instead, they're making smart bets: aligning development to the organization's direction, keeping an eye on how work is changing, and opening up more paths for people to grow.

By zeroing in on these priorities, they're not just helping frontline workers build skills—they're making their organizations more adaptable and better prepared for what's ahead. And they're showing that L&D has a key role to play in shaping the future, not just reacting to it.

### Getting started

Below we outline 3 things leaders prioritize when it comes to building the frontline skills needed for the future, along with questions to ask, actions to consider, and data to look at.



Future-focused development doesn't always get the **attention it deserves.** But it's where many L&D leaders see the biggest long-term payoff



Domain: Future readiness

Goal: **Be a strategist.** Build skills for what’s next by aligning development to your organization’s direction

Priority: Develop capabilities that support the organization’s big bets  
*How will we build skills toward our big bets?*

**Questions to ask:**

- ➔ Which upcoming strategies, products, or initiatives require new skills?
- ➔ By when do we need those skills?
- ➔ Are there straightforward pathways or tracks for frontline workers to move into the critical roles needed for our big bets?
- ➔ How can we enable and recognize frontline participation in enterprise skill-building efforts?

**Options to consider:**

- ➔ Engage senior leaders to forecast big changes (e.g., strategic shifts, new products, planned market expansions)
- ➔ Identify the skills frontline workers will need to support these changes
- ➔ Partner with SMEs as needed
- ➔ Communicate priority skills to workers
- ➔ Explicitly include frontline workers in broader skill initiatives

**Look at data like:**

- ➔ Long-term organizational plans (strategy docs, 3-5 year vision, audacious goals, etc.)
- ➔ Revenue growth targets
- ➔ New projects / business targets
- ➔ Current workforce skills data
- ➔ Forecasted skill needs and automation impacts by role

Figure 13: Getting started on developing capabilities that support the organization’s big bets | RedThread Research, 2025

Priority: Build skills for tomorrow’s tasks  
*How will changing work shape the skills that frontline workers will need?*

**Questions to ask:**

- ➔ How will evolving tech (AI, robotics) affect the tasks that frontline workers will need to perform?
- ➔ What other (non-tech) trends may change the tasks associated with frontline work?
- ➔ How might we reimagine or redesign frontline work in the future?
- ➔ If workforce reductions loom, do we have a plan to reskill or redeploy people?

**Options to consider:**

- ➔ Scan internal and external trends (e.g., tech, process shifts) that may impact frontline work
- ➔ Identify how frontline roles and tasks may evolve in response to these trends
- ➔ Map tasks likely to be automated vs. those needing deeper human skills
- ➔ Articulate what skills frontline workers may need
- ➔ Create paths & development opportunities specifically to build the identified skills

**Look at data like:**

- ➔ Trends in technology (AI, automation, digitization, etc.)
- ➔ Upcoming changes in organizational systems or processes
- ➔ External skills data (in-demand vs. waning skills in the job market)
- ➔ Internal skills data (what skills workers have & how they’re changing)
- ➔ Feedback from workers on new skill relevance

Figure 14: Getting started on building skills for tomorrow’s tasks | RedThread Research, 2025



**Domain: Future readiness**

**Goal: Be a strategist.** Build skills for what’s next by aligning development to your organization’s direction

**Priority: Support internal mobility**

*How can we make career mobility visible and achievable for frontline workers?*

**Questions to ask:**

- ➔ Have we made it clear how frontline workers can pivot or grow internally?
- ➔ What specific development opportunities can help build a more mobile frontline workforce?
- ➔ What might be blocking frontline internal mobility today?
- ➔ How might we remove those barriers?

**Options to consider:**

- ➔ Build skill frameworks and career paths applicable to frontline workers
- ➔ Offer rotations or cross-skilling to expand workers’ skill sets and agility
- ➔ Evaluate tech to scale and personalize career paths and mobility opportunities
- ➔ Showcase success stories of frontline workers who moved to new roles
- ➔ Help frontline workers leverage career coaches or mentors to identify mobility opportunities

**Look at data like:**

- ➔ Time to fill roles internally
- ➔ Turnover in mission-critical roles
- ➔ Retention
- ➔ Worker sentiment around mobility opportunities
- ➔ Participation rates in mobility opportunities



Figure 15: Getting started on supporting internal mobility | RedThread Research, 2025



## Wrapping up

Frontline development cannot and should not be everything to everyone—it needs to focus on what matters most for your organization and its frontline workers. By streamlining the essentials (your license to operate) and targeting urgent business needs, L&D functions can create space to invest in future skills. This approach not only boosts day-to-day performance but also prepares organizations to handle unexpected challenges. We hope the framework, goals, and priorities in this report serve as a useful guide as you shape your own approach.



## Appendix 1: Authors



### Dani Johnson

#### Co-Founder & Principal Analyst

Dani is Co-founder and Principal Analyst for RedThread Research. She has spent the majority of her career writing about, conducting research in, and consulting on human capital practices and technology.

Before starting RedThread, Dani led the Learning and Career research practice at Bersin, Deloitte. Her ideas can be found in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *CLO Magazine*, *HR Magazine*, and *Employment Relations*.

Dani holds a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Brigham Young University.



### Heather Gilmartin Adams

#### Senior Analyst

Before joining RedThread in 2020, Heather spent 10 years at organizational culture change consultancies and the U.S. Department of the Treasury. She has an MA degree in International Affairs from Columbia and a BA in History from Princeton. Heather has lived in Germany, China, Japan, and India and was, for one summer, a wrangler on a dude ranch in Colorado.

## Appendix 2: Methodology & contributors

This report is based on 4 months of qualitative research. After completing a lit review of over 35 academic and business articles and reports, we conducted a research roundtable with 17 L&D and HR leaders and did in-depth interviews with 22. We conducted process and thematic coding on the interview and roundtable transcripts to identify themes and synthesize the framework that emerged in this research.

Many thanks to the individuals who took the time to contribute to this study. Where possible, we've listed their names below. Several others must remain anonymous—but you know who you are, and we thank you!

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
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| ➔ Dana Edwards    | ➔ Meredith Wellard |
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