

# Impact of COVID-19 on L&D



# Contents

1. A New Normal Emerges	3
2. The L&D Imperative: Aligning Learning with Business Strategy	4
3. The Upskilling-Reskilling Need	6
4. Relook at L&D Budgets during COVID-19	8
5. Learning Goes Virtual	9
6. Challenges for Organizational Learning	11
7. Learner Experience Trends	13
a. High-Touch: L&D, Manager and Leader Support for an Engaging Learner Experience	13
b. High-Tech: Tools for a Great Learner Experience	16
8. Long Term Trends	17
9. The Skills of the Future	18
10. A Purpose-led and Humane L&D Approach	20
11. Measuring the Impact of Learning	21
12. Way Ahead	23
13. Annexure	24
14. Sources	25
15. About KNOLSKAPE	26



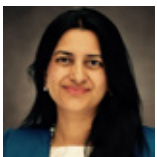
# 1. A New Normal Emerges

With the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses and organizations faced sudden slowdown and uncertainty.

Lockdown forced people to work in radically new ways, and organizations rediscovered and repurposed 'how to work and sustain'. Leaders had to balance the new business priorities while finding ways to engage and leverage their people. Workforce issues became central business issues and this compelled the HR organization to respond quickly and creatively.

*"COVID-19 was a very challenging time for one and all. It was also a very tough time for the business. There was a lot of ambiguity. The priorities for the organization were laid out by HR very clearly*

- *People and safety*
- *No compromise on Values*
- *Care & safety-first approach*
- *Business continuity plans"*



**Pavitra Singh**  
CHRO, PepsiCo

The traditional HR role evolved to facilitate agile working.

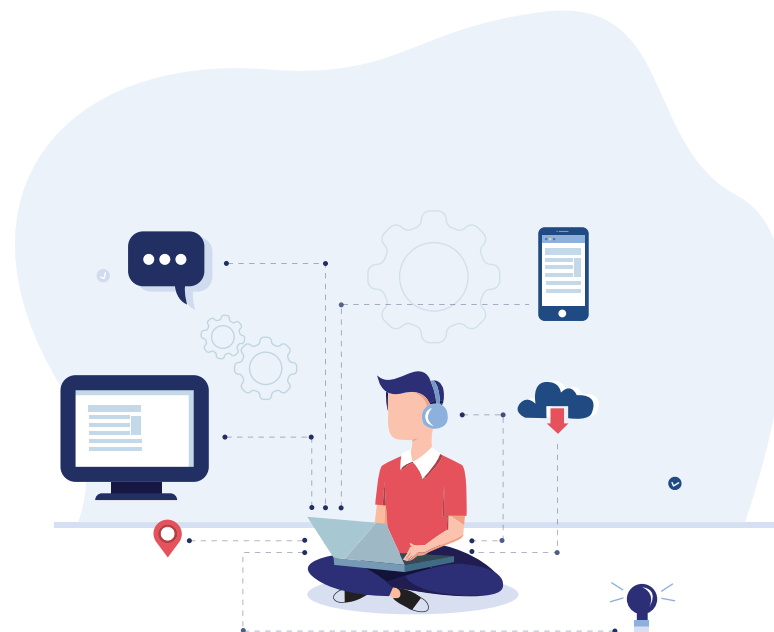
A silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it proved HR to be a bolder, 'exponential' HR, one that would expand its focus and extend its influence to better address organizations' workforce and business issues.

*"When COVID-19 set in, we started following all health guidelines and took charge to support employees in the work-from-home transition. Business continuity plans were put in place, and we formed a strong employee connect. HR managed this through webinars and digital town halls."*



**Suchitra Shahapurkar**  
Vice President, Corporate  
Human Resources, TÜV SÜD South &  
South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa

HR now has an opportunity to build on its newly enhanced position, and shift its role from managing employees to re-architecting work, so as to position organizations to thrive sustainably.



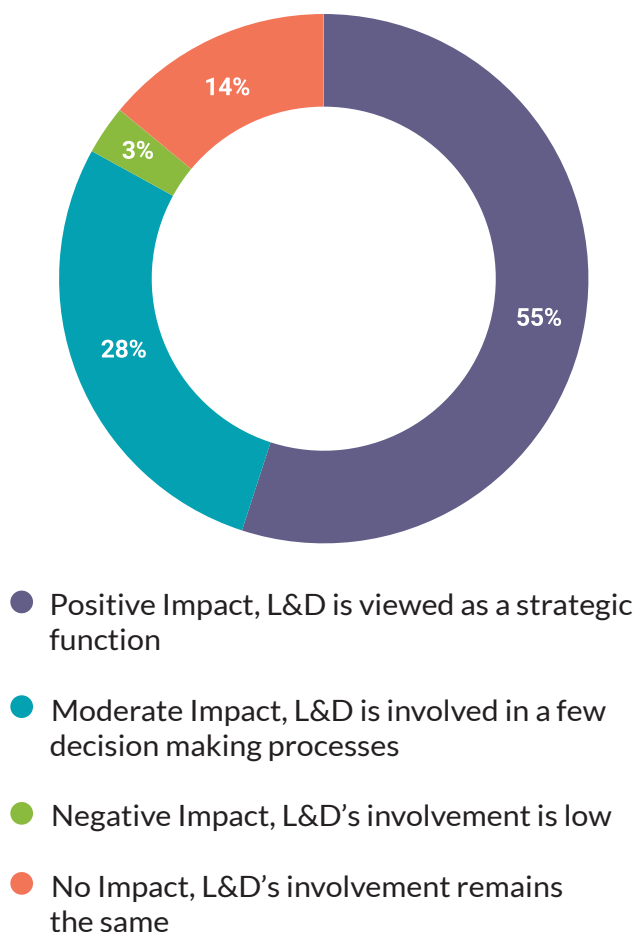
## 2. The L&D Imperative: Aligning Learning with Business Strategy

**55% of organizations believe that COVID-19 has had a positive impact on the L&D role. L&D is viewed as a strategic function (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)**

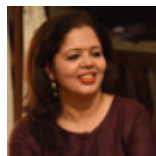
Remote working and virtualization have forced organizations to fundamentally rethink the role of learning. As work-from-home became a norm, we have seen the continued rise of learning at the employee-end (LinkedIn<sup>21</sup>). Now, employees value learning more and are building the learning-habit to help them adapt and cope with change. The **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE** survey results support this view. In April 2020, just when the lockdown was announced, online learning saw an exponential growth. During April-September 2020, KNOLSKAPE saw a 30X growth in unique user visits for the simulation-based self-paced learning courses, with very good course completion rates and feedback scores. KNOLSKAPE helped 100+ customers across the globe transition their learning programs to a virtual blended learning format.

As L&D led the shift from 'survive to thrive', business became more confident in L&D's ability to help organizations navigate future changes. As seen in the graph, according to the **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey**, the role of L&D has become ever-more strategic.

**Impact of COVID-19 on the L&D role**



*L&D strategy is focussed on managing the development of people, to do it in such a way that it supports the key business priorities and talent strategies. Learning strategy aims to support capability development across the organization in a cost effective manner on those areas which have become business necessity post pandemic.*



**Dr. Manavi Pathak**  
Head Talent and Leadership &  
Organizational Development  
Trent Ltd.

Secondary research is very much in line. 66% of global L&D professionals agree that their function has become a much more strategic part of their organization.<sup>21</sup> This change has primarily been driven with Executive leadership teams truly recognizing the value of learning. Learning quickly became a CXO priority, as it took on a more strategic role. 70% of surveyed L&D professionals stated a 159% increase in CEO championship of learning and development in just seven months.<sup>21</sup>

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*“The pandemic was a game-changer for Ericsson India. Starting April’20, business priorities changed and competencies evolved. Budgets got renegotiated, so training took an initial back seat as the L&D function had to renegotiate with vendors and explore internal trainer capability. Technology became a priority as the training ecosystem was redefined to virtual training. Gradually, more focus was put on developing the capability for working in the virtual world”*



**Chetna Munshi**

Head of Learning & Development Global  
GSC Ericsson Global India

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*“When the pandemic hit us, L&D was at a critical juncture. The challenges were three fold i.e. (a) Making meaningful supply of well curated content from a barrage of online and digital learning assets (b) Being mindful of the fact that it is engagement first, and development next, for the learners, so as to be mindful of work-from-home eventualities; and (c) Converting some of their key flagship deliverables into virtual / digital medium without compromising on the impact and effectiveness. It is such a pleasure to see that all across, L&D teams have stood up to these challenges, have successfully delivered and have so well supported their organizations. This was a change in action, change on the go, change for a brighter and more sustainable future. L&D truly became a strategic partner to business, in helping its human resources stay invested in creating value.”*



**Jaladhi M Thakkar**

General Manager - Learning & Development (Management Education Academy)  
Tata Motors

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## Key Takeaways

Organizations are now looking to build learning strategies to better integrate learning with rapidly changing business needs. While CXOs are seen championing organizational learning, L&D professionals may actively become a part of core business conversations and address the subsequent reskilling and upskilling needs dynamically, at the point of business need, and in a continuous fashion. For this, it is necessary for L&D to develop a strong sense of business acumen and not come across just as a functional expert .

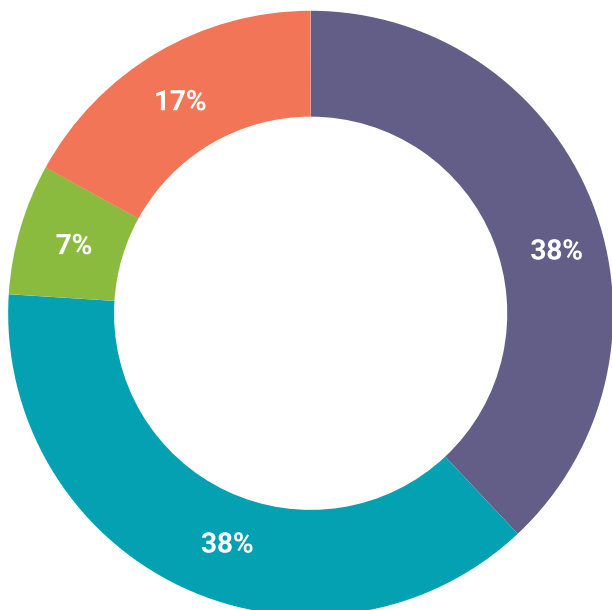
### 3. The Upskilling-Reskilling Need

**38%** participants reported that there was a significant increase in upskilling and reskilling focus, due to COVID-19 (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)

The World Economic Forum had announced in Jan 2020, “The world is facing a reskilling emergency. We need to reskill more than 1 billion people by 2030<sup>9</sup>.” COVID-led lockdown reinforced that the only way to adapt is through new capabilities and new ways of working.

38% of 2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey participants indicate that there was a significant increase in upskilling and reskilling focus, due to COVID-19. The focus appears to be high in BFSI (67% said there was a significant increase in reskilling-upskilling focus) and IT-ITES (63%).

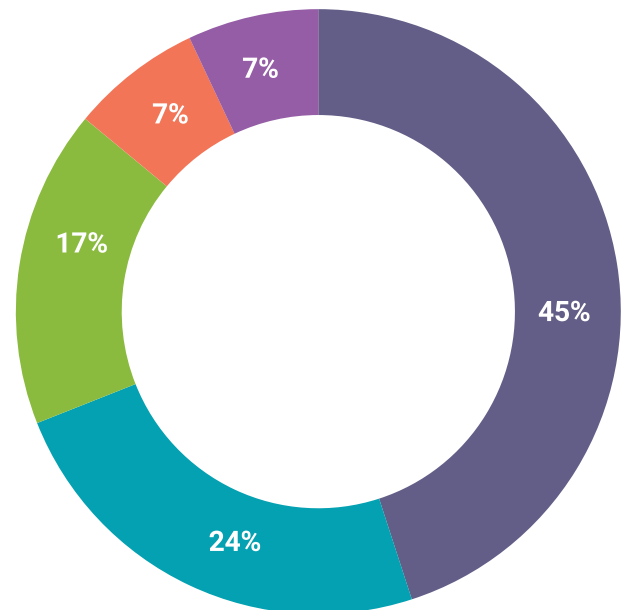
**Focus on upskilling and reskilling change during the pandemic**



● Significant Increase    ● Moderate Increase  
● No Change    ● Decrease

As per 2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey, the majority upskilling-reskilling focus was across all employee levels, and special attention was paid to frontline employees.

**Levels in the organization that received most attention from L&D standpoint**



● Employees across all levels  
● Frontline employees  
● Managers and above  
● C-Suite/Exec Leadership Level  
● Handpicked employees across levels

During the pandemic, workforce capability emerged as the second highest factor in transforming work<sup>15</sup>. To navigate future disruptions, 72% organizations quoted “the ability of their people to adapt, reskill, and assume new roles” as the top-ranked item.<sup>13</sup>

Organizations have realized this reskilling-upskilling need. CXOs have reported a 3X increase in training efforts during the lockdown and have seen virtual learnings breaking down legacy barriers.<sup>15</sup>

Certain sectors, such as telecom saw a spurt in training needs.

*“With the onslaught of lockdown, all our towers needed to be serviced 24\*7 to ensure non-stop mobile connectivity. Field teams continued working outdoors and office teams moved to work-from-home. Earlier, virtual learning was not a norm, but we prioritized technical training through a repository of self-paced courses, made available through our Subject Matter Experts. Within the first 3 months we had completed almost 50% of normal completion rates.”*



**Vishal Manchanda**  
Vice President & Learning Head  
Indus Towers Limited, India

## Key Takeaways

This urgency in skills-shift is here to stay as the shelf-life of skills is drastically reducing, and new skills are continuously emerging. Behavioral-leadership skills shall play a critical role in propelling organizations forward, hence organizations may predict the future-skills by investing in predictive technologies, and topping that up with application of human insights. Building the right behavioral and leadership capability is a precursor to building a ‘super’ workforce which is resilient and adaptable to current and future disruptors. To make capability building a top priority, continued leadership buy-in is essential, so that intensive budgetary investments are made possible for a sustained learning transformation.





## 4. Relook at L&D Budgets during COVID-19

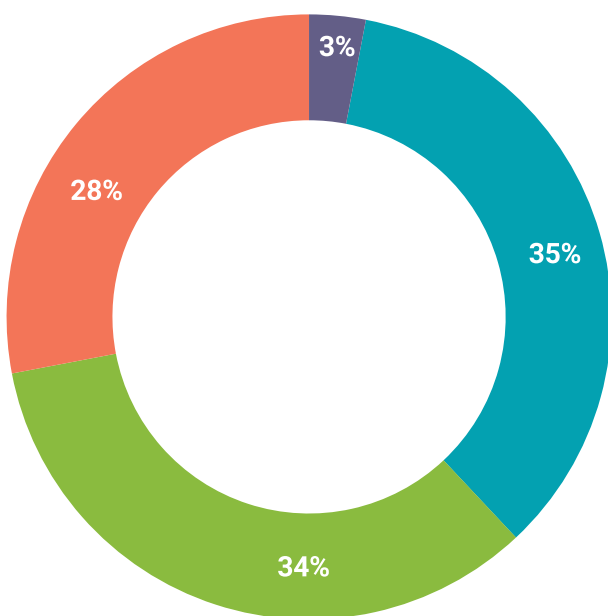
Merely **3%** of organizations increased their training budgets, while **69%** showed a budget decrease during COVID-19 times. (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)

*"Budgets will bounce back slowly for us, but primarily, L&D needs to be an independent function and not under the umbrella of HR, to build a say at the table."*



**Vishal Manchanda**  
Vice President & Learning Head  
Indus Towers Limited, India

**Impact of COVID-19 on L&D budget:  
2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey**



- Positive Impact, Budgets have increased
- Moderate Impact, Budgets are cut down marginally
- Negative Impact, Budgets are slashed
- No Impact, Budgets remain the same

India Deloitte's findings (2021) support this KNOLSKAPE outlook. L&D budgets dropped for 47% of the organizations, but remained the same for 34% of them. In fact, three out of every four organizations surveyed had their budgets curtailed by more than 20%<sup>12</sup>. Even with learning-budget cuts, organizations are prioritising and spending on integrated technologies<sup>12</sup>. On the contrary, globally, 84% of organizations had increased funding for reskilling and retraining, with 18% describing their additional investment as 'significant'.<sup>5</sup>

### Key Takeaways

All in all, COVID-19 has forced organizations to adapt current learning approaches to enable remote and online delivery, urgently and radically, with little or no budget available<sup>4</sup>. Organizations are turning to the L&D teams for content curation and content creation to build more learner centric programs internally. A majority of L&D professionals are shifting their Instructor led training (ILT) spend to Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT) and online learning. With costs of in-person training no longer applicable, more budget is now freed up to invest in world-class digital learning experiences that learners can engage with while at home<sup>21</sup>.



## 5. Learning Goes Virtual

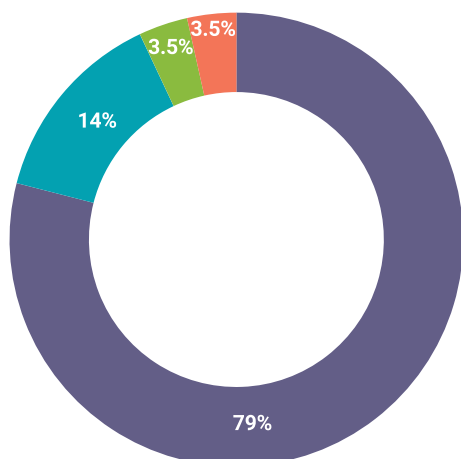
**79% of organizations stated that they had converted over 75% of in-person training to virtual blended training during COVID-19 (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)**

Globally, remote-working was made sustainable primarily due to the introduction of digital collaboration platforms<sup>13</sup>. Learning was no different.

According to the **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey**, a phenomenal 79% of organizations stated that they had converted over 75% of in-person training to virtual blended training (virtual instructor-led cum self-directed learning) during COVID-19. In fact, one of the biggest challenges that KNOLSKAPE was involved in the past year was helping the L&D teams convert their ILT to VILT programs. This required re-imagining the entire learning construct including program duration, engagement tools, modality and much more.

While the shift to virtual blended training was happening, there seemed to be a long way to go (2020 India- APAC KNOLSKAPE survey).

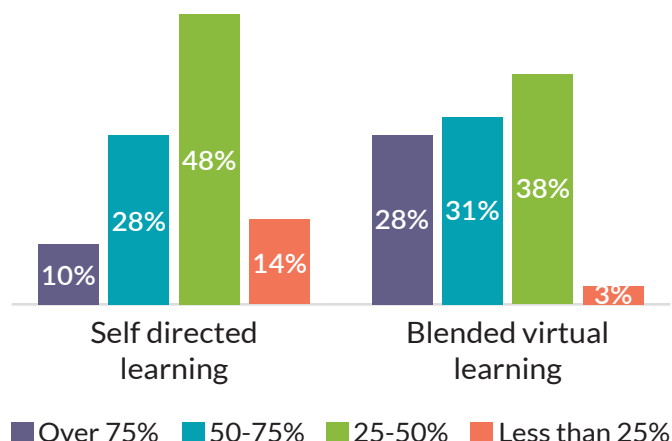
**Percentage of structured in-person training that was converted to virtual blended training**



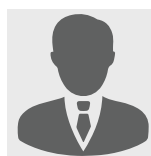
● Over 75% ● 50-75% ● 25-50% ● Less than 25%

While the shift to virtual blended training was happening, there seemed to be a long way to go (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey).

**Percentage of shift to purely self directed learning versus blended virtual learning**

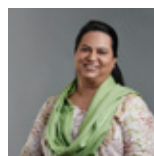


*“After 4-5 months of transition time, self-paced courses moved to a usage of 70% and VILTs to 30%”*



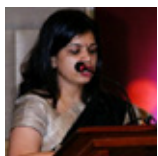
**Anupam Suri**  
Sr. Vice President & Head  
Citi Learning

*“TÜV SÜD moved 100% to VILT. The focus was more on the frontline focused technical courses, whereas for middle management a mix of 60% VILT and 30% self-directed learning was used for soft skills”*



**Suchitra Shahapurkar**  
Vice President, Corporate  
Human Resources, TÜV SÜD South &  
South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa

*“Critical sectors such as banking saw a huge change in how learners learn with the shift to work-from-home. Firms have focused on conversion of all ILT content to VILT and self directed learning in a very short period of time. Digital medium adoption during this period has risen by 39% and continues to have an upward swing. Eventually, self-directed learning and virtual sessions turned to a 50:50 mix”*

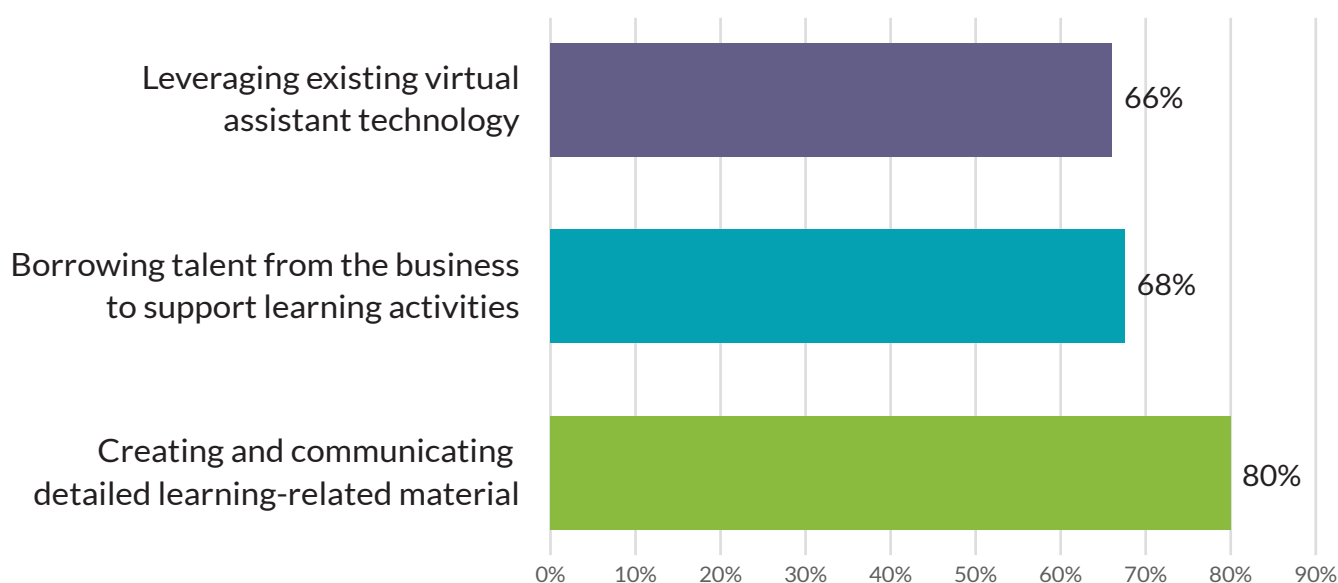


**Priya Aneesh**

Country Learning Lead - India GSC,  
GFC & Tech Centres, HSBC

India-based secondary research also resonates these words. 98% respondents<sup>12</sup> agreed to utilizing virtual learning during the pandemic, with 23% looking at virtual delivery as their first priority. Adoption, rather than new investments seemed to be the new trend, 56% organizations tried to drive the adoption of existing virtual platforms while 33% opted for a balanced mix of existing & new platforms.<sup>12</sup>

#### ***How did learning teams support people<sup>12</sup>?***



## Key Takeaways

In the shift towards virtual learning, the biggest challenge faced was to convert ILT to VILT curriculum. Virtual Learning formats were designed with shorter iterations i.e. 60-90 minutes and 2-4 hours modules, as against the traditional classroom modules of half a day to 3 days. Apart from designing shorter consumable content, L&D was to work closely with the business for learning-support to ensure high levels of virtual adoption. L&D teams may want to proactively support people and managers to help them adopt the learning technologies and tools.

## 6. Challenges for Organizational Learning

**55% respondents quoted the biggest challenge to be 'replacing and redesigning in-person programs to virtual programs' (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)**

Today's employee and manager is time-strapped. Moreover, engaging learners in exceptional crises when everyone is experiencing disruption, is difficult. While virtual has become the new normal, it is crucial to ensure learning is interactive, given today's digital learner's jobs, behaviors, habits, and preferences.<sup>12</sup>

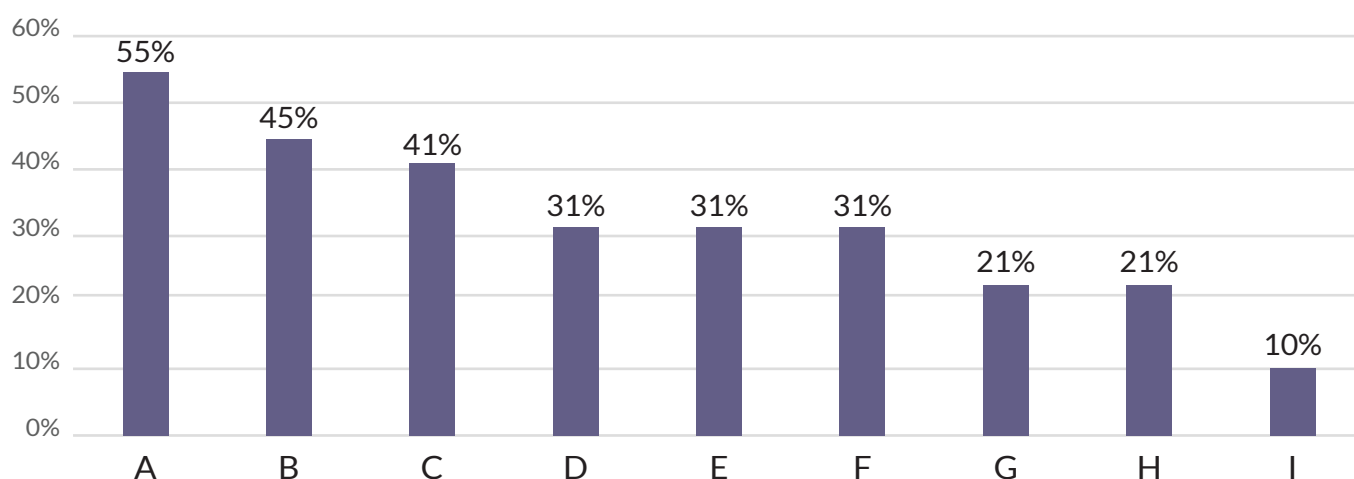
*"Managers need to be coaxed to get involved in their teams' development as business priorities take over and learning gets pushed back, especially for leadership/soft skills. Even for us, technical courses took priority and we ensured learning continued, especially at mid-level"*



**Vishal Manchanda**  
Vice President & Learning Head  
Indus Towers Limited, India

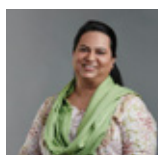
The 2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey shows that the biggest challenge was 'replacing and redesigning in-person programs to virtual programs' (55%), especially in FMCG (67%) and IT-ITES (63%) sectors. Other key challenges were, 'prioritizing learning needs for employees across levels and roles', and 'employee engagement'.

**Challenges faced by L&D during the pandemic**



- A - Replacing and redesigning in-person programs to virtual programs
- B - Prioritizing learning needs for employees across levels and roles
- C - Employee Engagement
- D - Remote Working
- E - Managing/Leading Remote Teams
- F - Technology and Infrastructure support
- G - Employee Productivity
- H - Employee Wellbeing
- I - Other

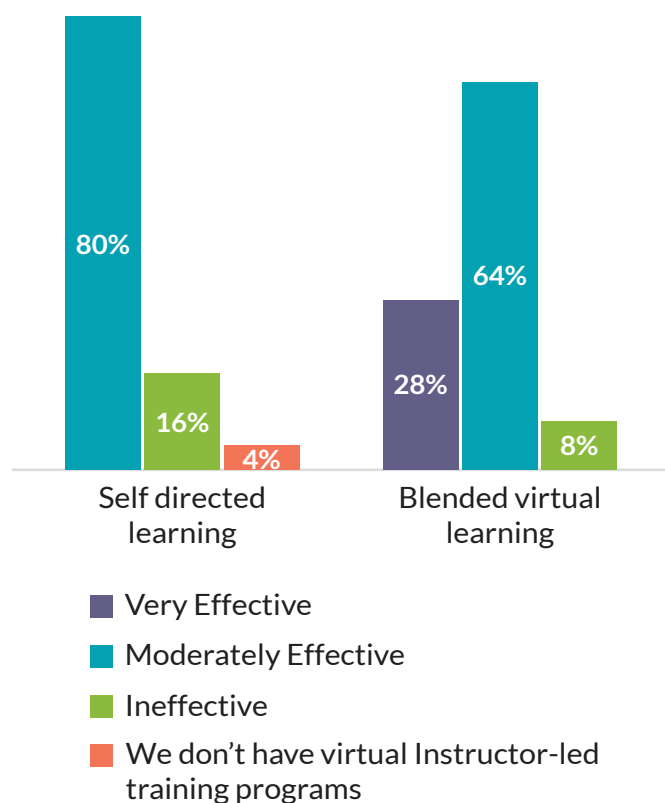
*"Making learning a priority is a challenge; we must ensure we give learning paths to the employees for them to grow. Moreover, it is a struggle to collaborate and drive the organization's values virtually through onboarding. Hence in-person interaction is imperative"*



**Suchitra Shahapurkar**  
Vice President, Corporate  
Human Resources, TÜV SÜD South &  
South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa

Effectiveness is another challenge. 16% respondents stated self-directed learning to be 'ineffective', while 80% mentioned it to be 'moderately effective'. VILT shows better prospects with 28% stating it to be 'very effective' and 64% feeling it is 'moderately effective'. (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey).

**Effectiveness of Self-directed learning vs. Blended Virtual learning**



*"The role-based programs were rolled out in 2019. In 2020, we further customized due to COVID-19, with modules broken down into multiple sub-offerings. We used MS Teams or Breakout rooms to foster these discussions"*

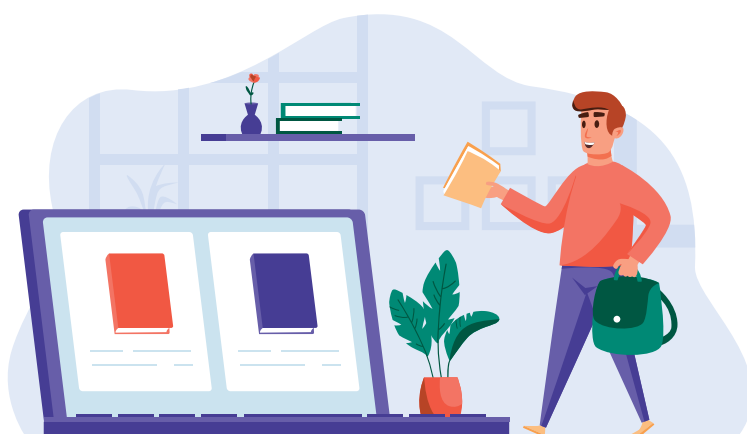


**Ayaskant Sarangi**  
Sr. Vice President, Leadership and  
Talent Management, Wipro

Experiential Learning is thus, the way ahead to curate a great Learner Experience.

## Key Takeaways

L&D can proactively address these challenges with the right blend of hi-tech and hi-touch approaches. AI, analytics, automation and digitization expertise is required to build robust and new-age platforms with the best user experience. This should be complemented with coaching and advisory inputs from real people i.e. managers, L&D professionals and leaders themselves.



# 7. Learner Experience Trends

*A great learner experience can create the right 'pull', placing the employee at the core of organizational learning. (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)*

With learning going virtual, challenges such as low attention span, poor experience design, long course durations, and lack of proper technological infrastructure persist. Hence, employers need to design the Employee Experience keeping in mind the modern learner's disposition for learning while upholding the health, safety, productivity and collaboration<sup>1</sup>. The right blend of high-tech and high-touch is required to achieve this.

a

## High-Touch: L&D, Manager and Leader Support for an Engaging Learner Experience

To integrate learning with work-life, L&D may curate a learning design that suits the learner's flexibility, choice, and style. Personalized learning insights and data-driven learning assessments can help curate a Netflix-style learning experience.

*"Learning is heading for 'consumerism'. The learner needs to decide what they want to pick and choose rather than being pushed. While 70% is on the job, 30% is otherwise. Learning needs to be agile & innovative for the learners, as they want it, anytime and anywhere"*



**Shashank Bhushan**  
Chief Talent Development Architect  
& Vice President-HR, BMC

Learning Delivery should enable learning-for-task, rather than learning-for-job, so that learners are able to perform specific tasks better. This is possible when the focus is on 'application of learning'. A data-driven learning ecosystem can objectively help people shape their career conversations and coaching to set goals, manage their development and control their career. But mere data is not enough, the robustness of L&D tools is crucial to learning success. For example, logistical and technical glitches mar the flow of learning, and hence it is important to invest in state-of-the-art reliable learning systems.

*"The facilitators missed being in the classroom. In the virtual environment, they relied on chat and other participative and interactive mechanisms when video was an issue. Infosys has created a platform with features like quizzing, breakout rooms, etc to increase the engagement of a learner. Also, we have continued to use gamification from KNOLSKAPE which helped us to elevate the learner experience".*



**Dr. Jayan Sen**  
Senior Global Leader, L&D, OD and HR  
Infosys

With this approach, L&D leaders may fundamentally rethink the learning experience to enable collaborative, interactive and social learning experiences for groups of learners.

*“Build an environment conducive to transfer learning on-the-job with the right support from the organization to enable employees to try out new learnings in a safe environment”*



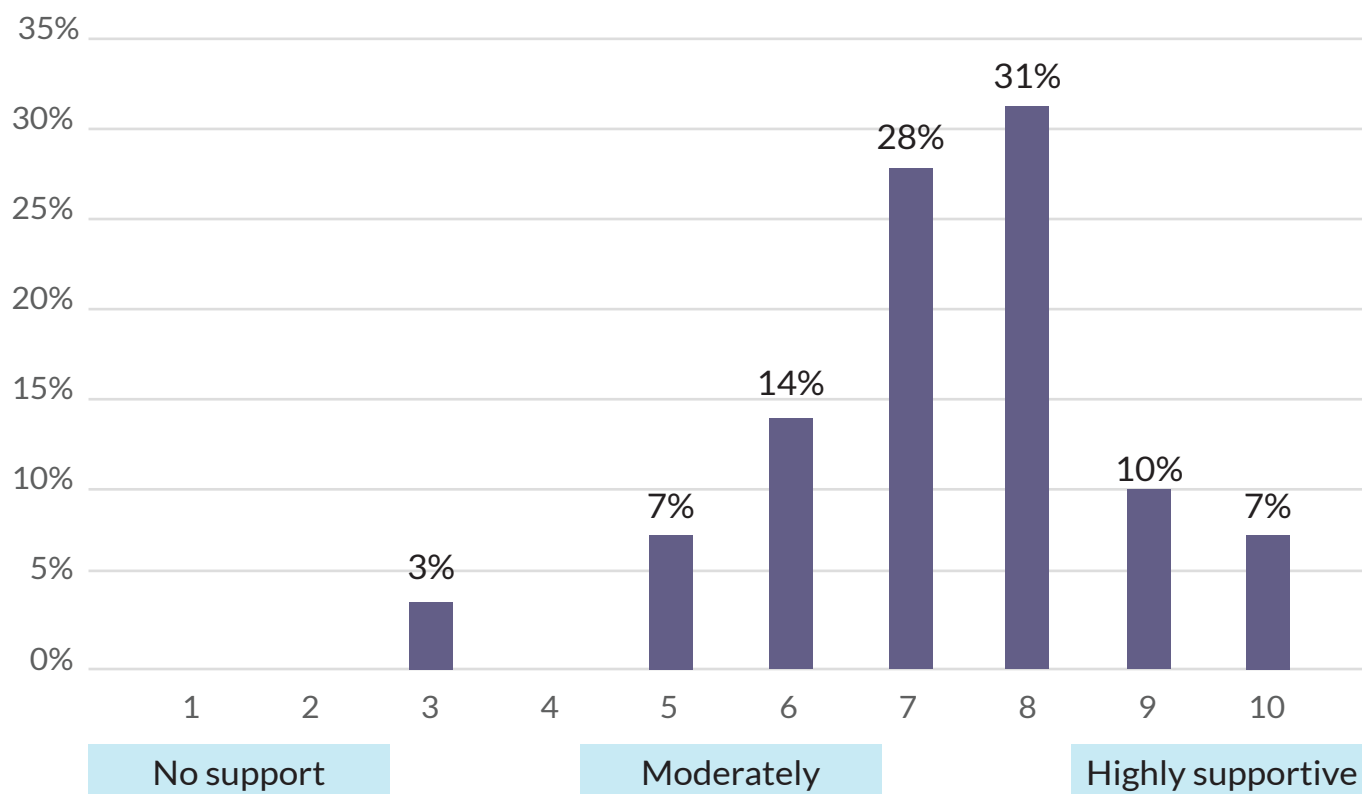
**Shripad Thosar**  
GM & Head L&D  
Voltas

Such a learning methodology starts at the team-level, with managers who are closely connected to their teams, taking the onus for their team members’ skill development. During the pandemic, At the manager-employee level, high-touch engagement became the need of the hour to balance social distancing. Going ahead too, managers need to understand how their people’s motivations for learning vary depending on their aspirations, and encourage them to consume learning at the ‘point of need’.

*As stated by a Manpower report<sup>19</sup>, almost two-thirds of organizations offer free training, but employees say they also need the time, support and guidance to capitalize on it.*

As per **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE** survey, 48% respondents gave a ‘Highly Supportive’ rating, while 49% gave a ‘Moderately Supportive’ rating to manager-support for the L&D team.

**How strongly are L&D teams supported by the managers of the participants undergoing learning programs?**





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*“For learning & skill development, we have a two-prong approach. Technical competencies are assisted by functional managers, whereas soft skill trainings are designed and delivered by HR which are agnostic to services portfolio”*



**Suchitra Shahapurkar**  
Vice President, Corporate  
Human Resources, TÜV SÜD South &  
South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa

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With the right manager and leader support, employees will feel a sense of ownership, accountability and belongingness, and will be motivated to put in efforts and time to learn.

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*“The manager’s role in employee learning is to create learning engagement through timely development programs and supplemented by motivation, peer discussions and a feedback forum. A magical ‘pulse meter’ that can check and ensure that the Learning Engagement creates a pull for employees to learn despite their day-to-day work and busy schedules would be ideal, especially in the present times where face-to-face reviews and meetings are rare. Top Management becoming a champion of Learning is one of the best ways to ensure Learning is embraced and institutionalised in an organization”.*



**L&D Leader**  
Singapore-based conglomerate

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To ensure that L&D, managers and employees actively work towards skill-building, leadership must put trust in them. Organizations may coach leaders on the ‘trust quotient’ and ‘growth mindset’, and leaders may actively spearhead relationship-building with remote workers, sourcing ideas from the bottom-up while creating the space and resources for employee creativity<sup>6</sup>.

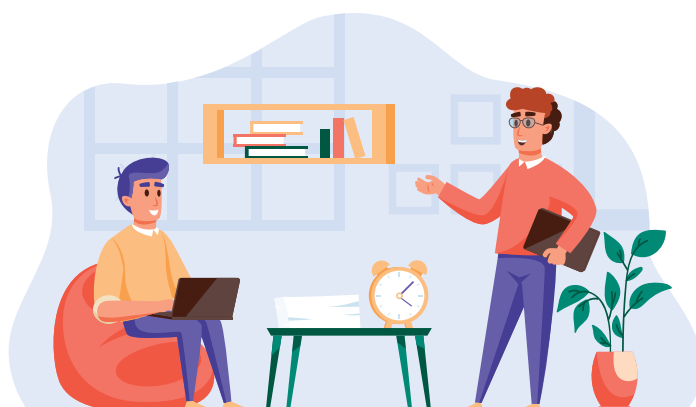
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*“At UST, associates were proactively engaged during the pandemic by leveraging executive sponsorship and their internal pool of High performance coaches, ensuring Role modelling to build personal connections & strengthen working relationships digitally. Domain academies were made available across the organization. The organization also tapped into the gig workforce to leverage specific skills from the extended workforce”*



**Kavita Kurup**  
Global Head - Talent & Organizational  
Transformation, UST

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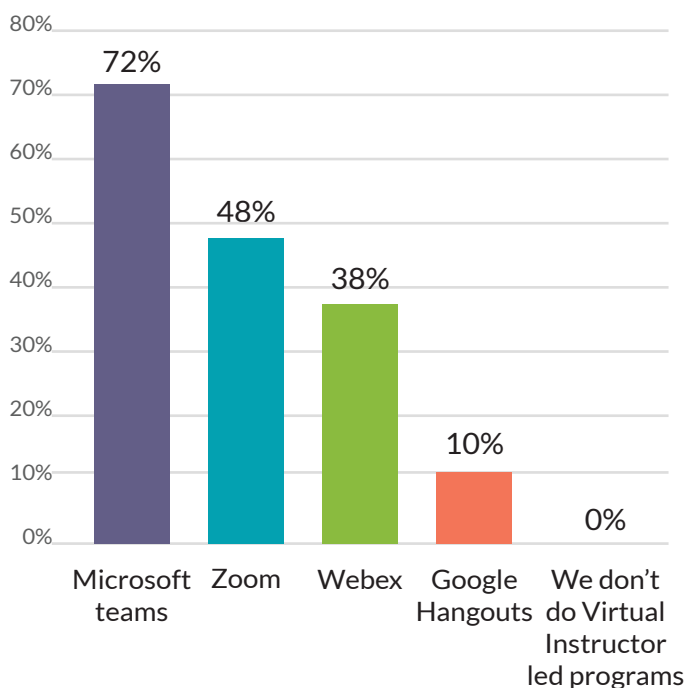
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## High-Tech: Tools for Fostering Virtual Learning

**75%** of India CXOs said they already had tools for collaboration in place and did not have to make new investments during the crisis.<sup>15</sup>

For the India-APAC workforce, MS Teams seems to emerge as the first choice for VILT, as per the **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey**.

### Video conferencing tools for VILT sessions



Globally, some of the key tools organizations used during COVID-19 are:

- Whiteboards
- MOOCs
- Video and audio conferencing
- Webcasts
- File Sharing

## Key Takeaways

Offering cutting-edge learning technologies and tools such as virtual reality, apps, and gamification simulate work experience and increase learning through exposure for the workforce<sup>17</sup>. They are essential to navigate the future of work, but may be complemented with the right human intervention. All three i.e. learners, managers and leaders have a critical role in instilling lifelong learning as an organizational priority. They may work closely to provide a range of future-forward learning opportunities suited for the digital age. Above all, L&D teams may build a solid business case for virtual learning as is the current state, showcasing the long-term value and highlighting the impact on business.

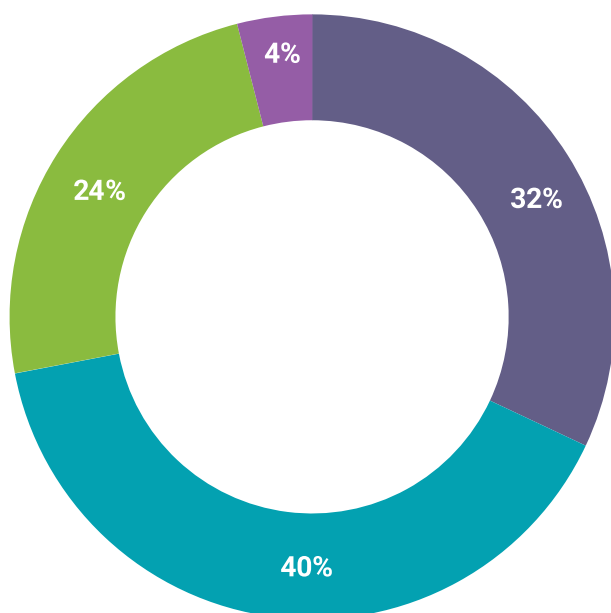


## 8. Long-Term Trends

**40%** organizations stated that 25-49% of their L&D strategy would return to classroom training going ahead.

According to the **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE** survey, a significant 32% organizations believe that less than 24% of their L&D strategy would return to classroom training, while around 24% feel that 50-74% of their L&D strategy would return to classroom training.

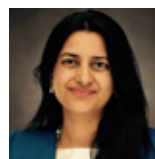
**How much of the L&D strategy will return to classroom training?**



● 24% or lower ● 25-49% ● 50-74%  
● Over 75% ● Other

Clearly, leaders believe in a blended approach to learning.

*"The entire organization shifted to virtual connect. Sales teams had the resources available, and with Zoom, the hierarchical gap came down. Virtual connects have been useful for PepsiCo. Going ahead, we intend to have a Hybrid model."*



**Pavitra Singh**  
CHRO, PepsiCo

*"After the COVID-19 era, we expect a majority of learning to continue in VILT and hybrid mode, with some returning to the traditional ILT blended learning mode"*



**Dr. Jayan Sen**  
Senior Global Leader, L&D, OD and HR  
Infosys

Secondary research too says that post COVID-19, virtual learning will constitute at least 40% of the formal learning structure, with some organizations expecting this figure to reach as high as 90%.<sup>12</sup>

### Key Takeaways

The Future of Learning is about integrating learning and work using the latest AI-enabled technologies, moving away from a top-down approach, and providing more agency to employees themselves to help them harness their potential. This is the way ahead for building the skills of the future.

## 9. The Skills of the Future

A whopping **79%** respondents stated 'employee mental health and happiness' to be a top in-demand skill, with 'leading virtual teams (72%)' and 'remote collaboration (66%)' coming a close next. (2020 India- APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)

*"Mindfulness and resilience became the trending topics during COVID-19, at UST"*



**Kavita Kurup**  
Global Head - Talent & Organizational Transformation, UST

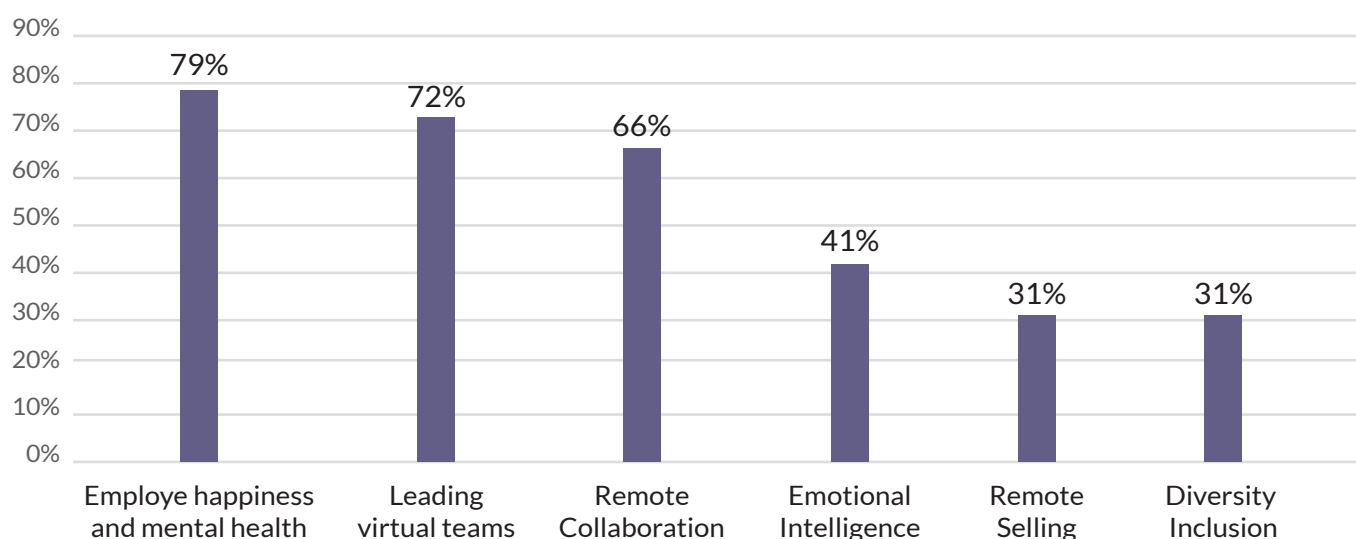
The new mandate of L&D is to build a resilient, emotionally intelligent, and empathetic work force.<sup>12</sup> According to secondary L&D research<sup>22</sup>, global leaders cited resilience and digital fluency as the top two most important skills across every country.

*"L&D moved beyond traditional responsibilities, from skill builders to wellness specialists, as they strove to create and enable employee access to wellbeing and mental health".*



**Dr. Jayan Sen**  
Senior Global Leader, L&D, OD and HR  
Infosys

**In-demand topics in context of the pandemic**



As seen above in the **2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey**, L&D teams were shouldering additional responsibilities related to 'employee mental health and happiness'. To address this, KNOLSKAPE co-created a product called 'Happiness@Work', with Dr. Raj Raghunathan, Professor of Business at UT Austin and author of one of the famous happiness courses on Coursera with 77 million enrolments. Other in-demand skills were 'Leading Virtual Teams' and 'Remote Collaboration', driven by the sudden shift to remote and virtual working.

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*“At Citi, during the pandemic, the focus areas for senior professionals were on Psychological Safety and Coaching teams, for the frontline staff it was providing resources for dealing with the pandemic, and for mid-level staff, it was EI & leadership resilience”*



**Anupam Suri**  
Sr. Vice President & Head  
Citi Learning

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An **India behavioral skills-snapshot**<sup>12</sup> shows that leaders considered ‘resilience’ as a must-have capability in the new normal. Priya Aneesh, Country Learning Lead - India GSC, GFC & Tech Centres, HSBC, believes that they have crossed the tide with respect to ‘leadership resilience’, now the focus is on sustaining it with skills such as ‘Entrepreneur mindset’, ‘Global mindset’, ‘External mindset’, ‘Digital agility’, ‘Relearning’, and being a leadership change catalyst.

To be able to build these high-level behavioral and leadership skills, L&D professionals may first themselves up their skills-game and outlook towards capability building.

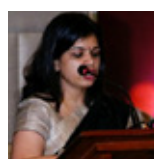
*As nearly **50%** India organizations have witnessed budget cuts, organizations are looking to reduce dependencies on external vendors. About **80%** organizations want to build ‘content curation’ as a key capability within their L&D teams in the future.<sup>12</sup>*

Post-pandemic, organizations are transitioning from buying content to curating personalised and contextualised content. The L&D teams of the future may embrace ‘Design Thinking’ (82%), ‘Personalization’(61%), ‘Knowledge-Sharing’(61%) & ‘Collaboration’.<sup>12</sup>

To build a workforce that can bounce back, express compassion, and promote positive relationships, L&D may be in an influential position.

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*“L&D needs to set expectations right and think about whether people are future-ready and have liquid high potential. The Future of Work is changing and L&D teams may start with upskilling themselves to facilitate upskilling others.”*



**Priya Aneesh**  
Country Learning Lead - India GSC,  
GFC & Tech Centres, HSBC

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## Key Takeaways

Building future skills requires a close look at the future of learning and the broader future of work. Learning cannot thrive as a standalone offering, it may be integrated into the overall employee experience. For this, L&D professionals may work closely with other talent professionals, to offer an integrated learning solution and entrench learning into day-to-day work.

# 10. A Purpose-led and Humane L&D Approach

Research<sup>6</sup> shows that those who are 'living their purpose' at work are much more likely to sustain or improve their work-effectiveness, have four times higher engagement and five times higher wellbeing. However, only one-third of respondents believe their organizations strongly connect actions to purpose.

During a disruption like COVID-19, organizations may acknowledge and address employees' anxiety and uncertainty, while building a learning strategy that reinforces the link between business and longer-term capability building.<sup>1</sup> This balance between people-needs and business-needs requires L&D to first, be integrated with other HR arenas such as employee engagement, performance management, career advancement and mobility rewards and recognition, HR policy and so on.

*"In today's culture, learning cannot be differentiated from behaving, so we kickstarted the pandemic response by creating e-learning modules for Stress Management and work-from-home Etiquette. The idea was to help the organization transition faster to a virtual working environment"*



**Ayaskant Sarangi**  
Sr. Vice President, Leadership and Talent Management, Wipro

UST is one of the organizations that believes mindfulness and resilience are trending areas to focus on, when it comes to employee development.

*"At UST, performance management and career pathing go hand-in-hand with learning. Internal mobility is facilitated, the forced ranking of the bell curve is gone, and payouts depends on team performance. While promotions are based on individual performance, annual increments are based on inflation and role. Their internal career management tool, Career Velocity, ensures apt career track possibilities and learning opportunities aligned with peoples' career goals and aspiration."*



**Kavita Kurup**  
Global Head - Talent & Organizational Transformation, UST

## Key Takeaways

Leaders may embed purpose in how they talk to employees, moving from the 'why' to the 'how' in establishing and linking employees to a clear purpose. Every employee touchpoint, and therefore, every HR intervention may evoke the purpose, this is possible if leaders themselves are able to see a clear business impact of L&D on talent and on business. L&D may, therefore, put in place measures and metrics to track the effectiveness and impact of learning on business.

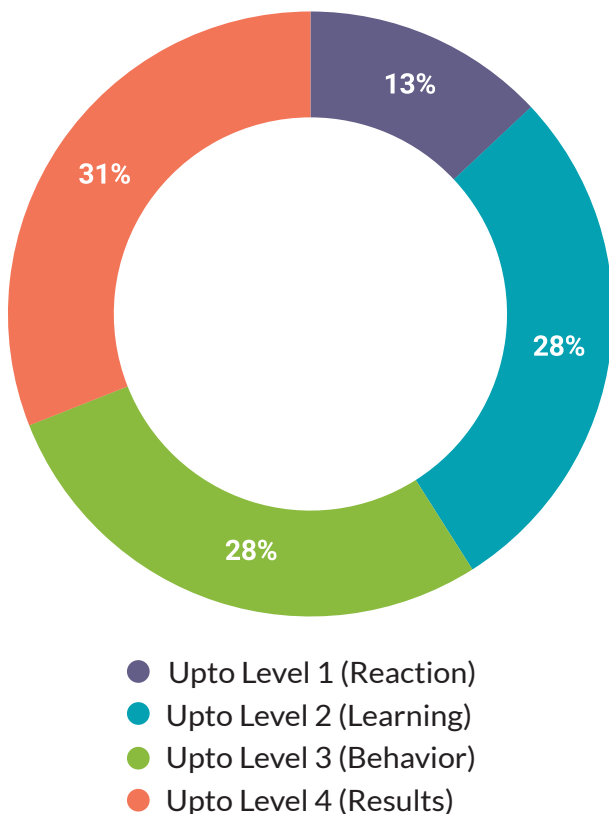


# 11. Measuring the Impact of Learning

A significant **31%** of organizations measure learning effectiveness up to Level 4 of Kirkpatrick (2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey)

2020 India-APAC KNOLSKAPE survey research below indicates a significant (31%) of organizations measuring learning effectiveness up to Level 4, with 28% measuring it up to Level 3 on the of Kirkpatrick scale.

*Levels of Kirkpatrick's model utilized for measuring effectiveness / Learning ROI in the virtual blended learning format?*



KNOLSKAPE worked with several companies to enable their virtual learning transition during COVID-19 times. It required an entire change management process. Initially, many learning leaders were skeptical about the impact of a virtual blended learning initiative. KNOLSKAPE collaborated and co-created strategies that helped them measure the effectiveness from Kirkpatrick Level 1 through 3, building leadership trust in the new learning methodologies.

*"Evaluation of ROI is very stringent for technical courses and is measured based on business outcomes achieved. Even for soft /leadership skills we have worked on projects where Level 4 of Kirkpatrick model has been achieved"*



**Vishal Manchanda**  
Vice President & Learning Head  
Indus Towers Limited, India

At the core, effective learning is all about meeting business needs. COVID-19 created a unique business situation, demanding an entirely new learning-outlook for organizations to stay afloat. Business relevance can be realized by measuring learning impact with the right metrics. Yet, globally, 55.4% of organizations are unsatisfied with the extent of learning measurement<sup>20</sup>. This may be because 'learner satisfaction', 'transactional system data', and 'learner engagement' are the primary metrics being used to assess the impact of learning.

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*"L&D teams may make an effort to converse and connect with business to proactively advise on the required competencies to make pipeline projects successful"*



**Chetna Munshi**  
Head of Learning & Development Global  
GSC Ericsson Global India

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## Key Takeaways

Putting in place the right learning metrics and tracking learning impact is essential to gain sustained CXO attention for the L&D function. Only when leaders believe and see that learning is propelling the people and organization in the right direction, will they make learning a fundamental lever of the business strategy.





# 12. Way Ahead

## ***The future of learning is blended ...***

COVID-19 has forced organizations to reimagine a new Future of Work, where virtual presence and physical presence co-exist. A high-tech-high-touch approach shall help reap the advantages of anytime-anywhere-anydevice learning, while plugging in the softer human-element for employee development. Blended learning is thus, an overwhelming design favorite of learning professionals, it helps get the best of both worlds. Such a hybrid model is here to stay and shall spearhead a continuous learning culture for the Future of Work.

## ***A great learner experience stems from a high-tech-high-touch approach...***

The core of a continuous learning culture is a great learning experience, because it encourages the adoption of digital learning. As KNOLSKAPE sees it, L&D may create a pull for blended learning by prioritizing the digitalization of learning through new-age technologies. Some relevant learning infrastructure and tools to aid blended learning are learning platforms, gamification, simulations, micro-learning, AI assessments and such digital experiential learning solutions. These technologies may be fortified with the power of human interactions, by applying coaching-mentoring capabilities wherever relevant. Last but not the least, L&D may invest in curating engaging and consumable content to top-up the learner experience. Such a high-tech-high-touch approach is the way ahead.

## ***Continuously upskill-reskill to build a resilient workforce and a future-forward business...***

The Future of Learning involves offering a robust future-skills curriculum for employees, without losing sight of humane issues such as mental health, happiness and holistic wellbeing. L&D must work closely with the C-suite and business leaders to drive a continuous learning culture and to uphold the employee experience. For this, L&D teams must first step-up their own skills-game and unlearn and relearn the future-skills. Upskilling for tomorrow is about unleashing the employee potential, and this starts with the L&D function becoming future-forward in its own skill-outlook.

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*"There has to be a mindset shift where learning is not a chore but a much needed necessity for growth"*



**Felicia Choong**  
Training & Learning Manager  
Nestle APAC

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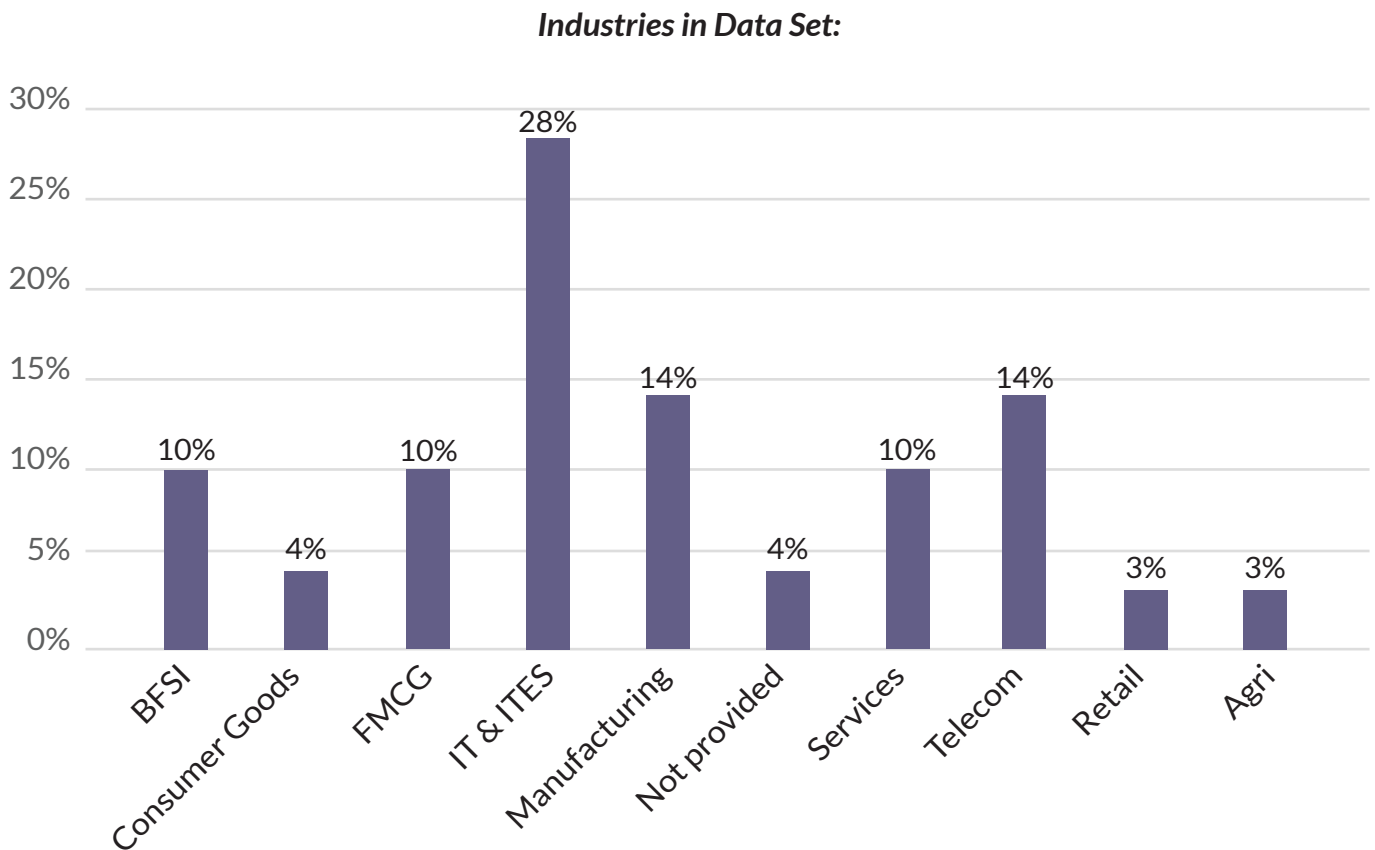
*"Learning needs to be on the leadership radar, a lot of CEOs have realized today that knowledge needs to be a top agenda"*



**Shashank Bhushan**  
Chief Talent Development Architect  
& Vice President-HR, BMC

# Annexure

To assess the state of the learning industry, KNOLSKAPE conducted an in-depth study wherein we interviewed more than thirty five learning and development and business professionals in India and abroad – Directors, CHROs, Talent Management Heads, Heads of Learning, Leadership Development professionals, and thought leaders, to understand their perspective on how COVID-19 had impacted the learning agenda.



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# About KNOLSKAPE

KNOLSKAPE is one of the fastest-growing experiential learning companies globally. Backed by the world's largest portfolio of experiential learning courses blended with their award-winning library of business simulations and a cutting-edge Talent Intelligence Platform, KNOLSKAPE is on a mission to help leaders and organizations accelerate their Leadership Development and Build Digital Mindset.

KNOLSKAPE is a Global Top 20 Gamification Company, recipient of Brandon Hall Awards, and has been recognized as a company to watch for in the talent management space by Frost & Sullivan and as a disruptor in the learning space by Bersin by Deloitte.





# KNOLSKAPE

## INSIGHTS CENTRE

