

Employee learning as the critical path to people success

✓ Training Completed



87%  Overall learning progress

It's official: adapt or fall behind

In a world full of unique individuals with different preferences and ideas, there's one thing that we can all agree on: **change is constant**, and the pace of change is ever-increasing. The world continuously shifts under our feet, and from a workplace context, that means that organizations and their people must adapt or fall behind.

Ultimately, employers have the responsibility to grow their people if they want them to be able to overcome challenges and perform at their best. Not only that, but mounting evidence indicates upskilling is much less expensive and risky than attempting to hire for every skill the business needs. In addition, the workforce expects to leverage learning and skill development as a way to adapt to change and disruption in their daily work and longer-term career journeys.

Based on data from a HiBob survey of **HR leaders** regarding learning and development practices and Lighthouse Research & Advisory's 2024 Learning, Skills, and Employee Mobility Study

of both employers and learners, the research indicates clear value in creating a cohesive talent development strategy that expands and elevates the skills of every member of a company's workforce.

The problem with that from the organizational side is that learning is often separate, siloed, and/or stale.

- It is **separate**. Learning happens somewhere outside the normal flow of day-to-day work. Employees have to pause their work to go and learn, even though learning is an essential element of the job. Only 57% of workers say they have the resources they need to adapt to change at work.
- It is **siloed**. Learning is often managed outside the other aspects of **talent management** at work. Performance, recognition, and goal setting are common practices for employers, and learning can and should be connected to each of those areas to create a richer and more fulfilling **employee experience**.

- It is **stale**. Learning is typically administered as a set of mandatory requirements that don't always change from person to person. Aligning learning strategy with business objectives at a macro level and with the individual's work and career progression on a micro level creates a richer and more vibrant learning culture.

In order to help each individual member of the workforce to adapt their skills, hone their strengths, and perform at a higher level, learning has to be a central component of every **company's people strategy**.

Learning and development has to be a priority because it enables the business to thrive as each individual's performance is unlocked through strategic talent development. Their knowledge is expanded allowing them to handle a wider range of business challenges and innovate better processes. Their skills are sharpened, speeding response times and reducing support requests from colleagues. And their expanded abilities can be leveraged for the benefit of their team, their function, and the organization as a whole.

Within the context of this report, we will look at:

- The blockers and barriers holding organizations back from embracing learning and development
- The characteristics of a comprehensive learning strategy
- The value of talent development to the workforce and the business

In the end, **employee development** is what we believe is a “no regrets” investment for HR. The common concern from leaders questioning investment in learning is this:

“What if we **develop** the skills of our workforce and then they eventually **leave** our company?”

They believe the worst outcome is that someone leaves after the business has invested in their skill development. This alternative scenario often plays out instead:

“What if we **do not develop** the skills of our workforce and they **stay** at our company?”

In other words, if leaders think the only way to keep people is to avoid training and growing them, then we'll never help each of our employees to optimize their skills at work, and from an organizational context, the business will never thrive to its full potential. That's what we mean by a "no regrets" investment. Growing our people and their capabilities is never a bad outcome. While not every investment in **skill development** will guarantee retention, the alternative of failing to develop your people and watching them stagnate presents a far greater risk.

Unfortunately, today many **L&D** leaders believe their workforce and leadership are not highly adaptable to change.

Based on this, **63% of employers believe that their workforce is not able to adapt to meet shifting demands, priorities, and other needs.** This isn't just a problem—it's a very real risk to the long-term sustainability of the business. Often this gap is born from trusting employees to learn the right content organically and totally independently. However, employees often lack the larger organizational context to align learning not just to their careers but to their employer's current and future needs. It's

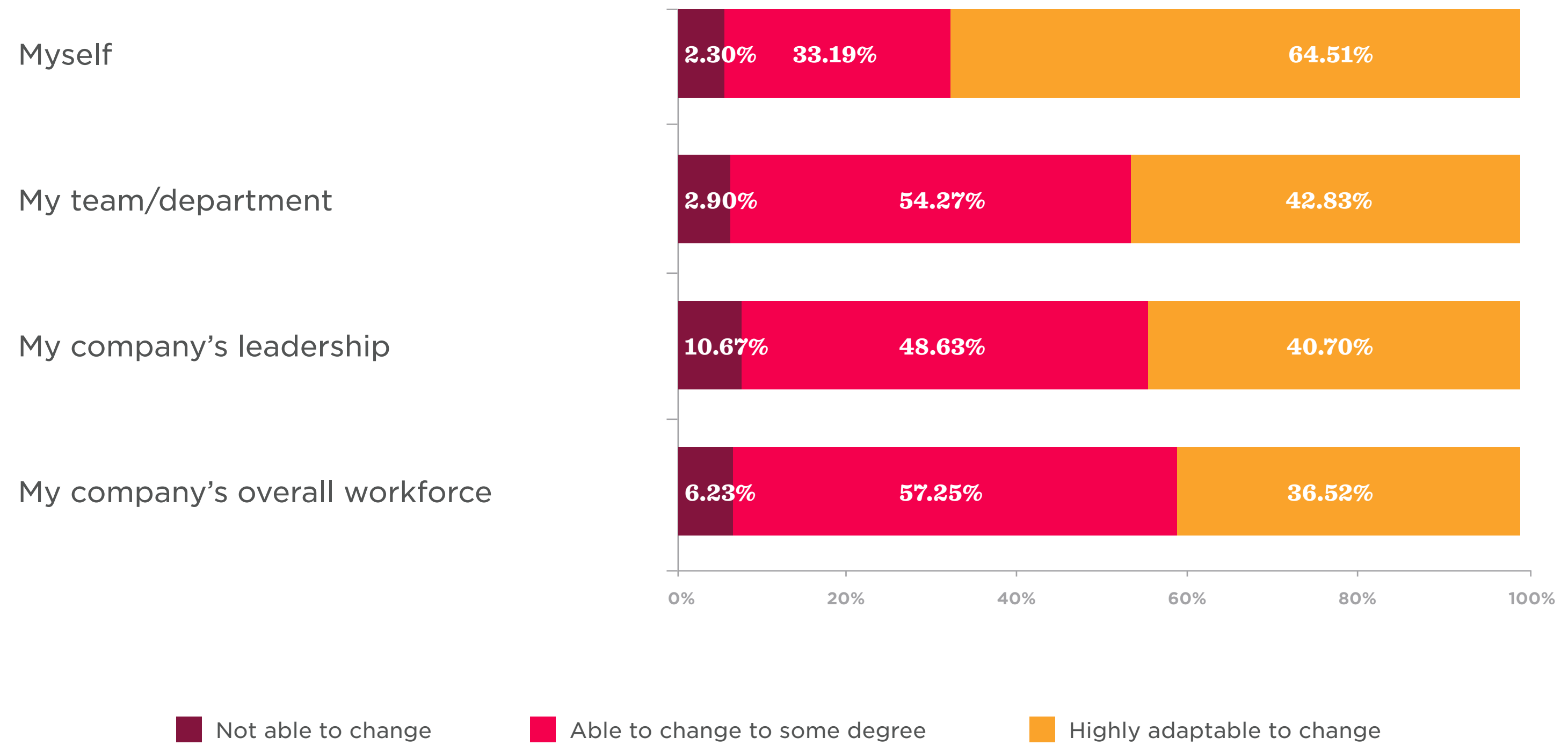
also a reason why a proactive and deliberate approach to learning, a key driver of adaptability, must be a core focus for success.

In a world of constant change, investing in deliberate learning and development is not just an option—it's a necessity. The ability of an organization to adapt and thrive depends on the continuous growth of its people. When learning is integrated into the daily workflow, aligned with business objectives, and tailored to individual career progression, it transforms from a separate, siloed, and stale function into a powerful driver of performance and innovation.

The benefits are clear: employees with expanded knowledge, sharpened skills, and a stronger connection to their company's mission are more likely to stay and contribute at higher levels. So why doesn't every company **invest in learning and talent development**? Let's start by looking at what holds organizations back from making that vision a reality.

Figure 1: Change readiness of organizational groups

Please rate the change readiness of the following groups



The blockers and barriers to learning and development

There's an educational concept called "backward design" that educators use when determining how to set up a course or curriculum. Essentially, it means starting from the desired outcome and working backwards into course design.

Imagine that we were putting together a course on **human resources management**. There are two paths we could take:

1. Divide our textbook up into the number of weeks in the semester and assign those weekly "chunks" to the students to finish the textbook over the duration of the course.
2. Decide on the outcome we're looking for, and then use the textbook, outside speakers, and other resources to create a learning experience that helps us achieve that outcome.

While the former is much easier and faster, the only thing we know for certain is that the students will finish the book. There's no guarantee they will know when or how to apply the content in their work. The latter requires more effort and planning, but we can craft an experience tailored to the work behaviors we are seeking such as the student will know how to choose among different strategies outlined in the book. In addition, such targeted and practical training efforts will leave the student excited and curious to learn more.

If pressed, virtually every HR leader would agree that growing their people and their skills is a worthwhile investment. But it's not as simple as assigning content or teaching a training class. Using the backward design approach, our ideal outcome isn't **training consumption**. The ideal outcome is a **well-developed, engaged, and successful workforce with the skills to handle real business challenges**.

The challenges that face employers as they work to develop their people are multifaceted, and they can cause some leaders to lose hope that it's even possible to develop their people adequately. We will explore some of the most common barriers to help identify where breakdowns exist.

Challenges with learning and business alignment

Aligning learning with the strategic direction of the business is essential for driving organizational success. However, many organizations struggle to make this alignment a reality. According to HiBob data, only **30% of employers** rate themselves as highly effective at aligning their L&D programs with **business goals**. This misalignment is a significant barrier to creating learning initiatives that support both individual growth and organizational priorities.

A deeper look into the data reveals a troubling gap between employers' intentions and employees' experiences. While **80% of HR and talent leaders** believe their company leadership is

clear on the skills employees need to remain relevant in the future, only 56% of employees feel that their company is actually investing the necessary resources to develop those future skills. This disconnect can lead to employees feeling disengaged from learning efforts, undermining the effectiveness of L&D initiatives.

Fortunately, there is growing recognition of this challenge, as shown by a **62% increase in the focus on evaluating and assessing learner needs** between 2023 and 2024.

However, without clear alignment between learning programs and business goals, organizations may continue to miss opportunities to develop the skills needed to stay competitive.

Talent leaders that lean into this challenge by prioritizing strong stakeholder relationships, clear objectives for learning content, and a tight connection between learning outcomes and organizational outcomes will ultimately see the best results

Challenges with content and scale

Another major barrier to effective L&D is the ability to identify the right content to achieve their business aligned goals and keep that content up to date and relevant. According to the data, one-third of employers report difficulty in maintaining current and relevant content for their learning programs. This challenge is compounded by the perception issue: approximately half of HR leaders believe their employees don't find learning programs relevant at an individual level, further decreasing engagement.

Moreover, visibility of development opportunities is a significant concern. **42% of employers report that learning and development opportunities are not sufficiently visible for employees to opt in.** At the same time, 47% of workers feel that growth opportunities within their organization are not distributed fairly or equitably. These issues highlight the need for organizations to ensure not only that learning content is fresh and applicable, but also that it is accessible and perceived as relevant and equitable by all employees.

Challenges with learning priorities and measurement

A notorious struggle for employers is evaluating the impact of learning content and training activities. Only one in three employers are using any sort of **ROI analysis**, according to the HiBob survey, and one of the other common measurement tools is an employee survey, which typically only measures satisfaction, not job impact or behavioral change. Without clear measurement strategies, L&D efforts may lack direction and fail to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Measurement is another significant obstacle when it comes to the employee perspective. Only one in two employees believes that their company effectively tracks employee skills, and **women are 28% more likely than men to say that they are unsure whether their employer knows their abilities.** This lack of tracking undermines efforts to engage employees in meaningful learning activities and show the impact of their learning enhanced skills on their work. If employees feel that leadership is not observing or valuing their skill development, it can lead to disillusionment and lower participation in L&D programs.

For companies to foster an engaged and invested learner population, they must first ensure that they are measuring learning outcomes and skills progression in a visible and impactful way. Companies also need this data to evaluate the quality of their content and delivery methods, potentially highlighting the degree of business alignment that exists.

While the list of challenges with learning, development, and career growth initiatives is a long one, these three issues are some of the biggest blockers to success.

Employers that take a measured approach and focus on taking down these hurdles one by one will see the clear and measurable value that learning programs can offer.



The characteristics of a comprehensive learning strategy

Employers today are looking at learning with a broader and more comprehensive perspective than ever before. With the advent of artificial intelligence technologies and other disruptive elements, companies have realized that it's not enough just to train the workforce for the problems of today—they have to develop them to face the problems of tomorrow, too.

In a recent interview with **Terri Lewis**, CHRO of One Call, she mentioned her HR team's priorities in developing their people for the current and future challenges ahead:

“

“ You have to have leadership buy-in and commitment. Your leaders have to be on board with this. You need to make your training engaging. You need to make it relevant. You need to embed it into the work environment. You have to publicly acknowledge that learning is expected and that it helps you grow your career and help the organization succeed. And then finally, you have to make it accessible and you have to be flexible. So those are some key areas that I think about and ways to make this better than just your standard approach.”

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Terri's approach offers so many lessons for employers that are evaluating their approach to learning, and it aligns with the research in some of the key factors for L&D success:

- A strategic commitment to talent development and skill growth
- Content that aligns to those critical skills
- The mechanism to deliver that content in an accessible and intuitive manner
- Above all, a culture that supports and enables each of these components across the workforce

Let's examine each of these to understand how they fit together and lead to a well-developed, agile workforce.

Establishing a strategic point of view

In one of the first learning studies developed by the team at Lighthouse, it was discovered that employers with better revenue, retention, and employee engagement scores were twice as likely to have a written strategy to drive the development and deployment of learning content.

That big-picture perspective is necessary, because otherwise there isn't a cohesive structure to the overall approach to learning across the organization. Leadership buy-in on learning as a strategic HR practice creates a level of confidence that is actually possible to measure, as the figure below indicates.

Figure 2: Comparing employer confidence in developing employee skills

	Employer perspective: I have strong confidence in our ability to develop the skills of our employees.	Employer perspective: I do NOT have strong confidence in our ability to develop the skills of our employees.
My organization values and supports every single employee (strongly agree)	64%	16%
Our workforce is highly adaptable to change.	52%	28%
Employees have the autonomy to pursue their own career path (strongly agree)	58%	13%
Employee development conversations happen monthly.	40%	18%
Our leadership is clear on the skills for future organizational success (strongly agree)	51%	16%

Any one of those statistics is telling, but taken as a whole, they demonstrate why it's paramount for an employer's leadership to have a plan for workforce development they can be confident in. For instance, it's powerful to see that employer confidence in skill development leads to employees being four times more likely to have autonomy to pursue meaningful and relevant **career paths**.

This isn't just about closing one skill or performance gap—it's about casting a vision for future success and giving the employee the training to take an active role in shaping that future.



Source: Lighthouse Research & Advisory's 2024 Learning, Skills, and Employee Mobility Study (n=1,172)

Aligning training resources with skill gaps

Imagine that your company's sales pipeline is based on outdated, stale, and incomplete data. That would ultimately cost the organization in terms of missed opportunities, wasted time, and inefficient results.

If it's true with sales, why wouldn't it be true with your other employees as well?

In the research, 72% of employers say that a lack of clarity into employee skills puts a cost or tax on the organization. However, when employers are developing their people, they have a much better understanding of what knowledge, skills, and abilities they are improving upon at a business level and at an employee level as well.

It's important to remember that learning doesn't just happen in courses and content. Mentors and coaches, projects and teams, and other workplace experiences can help to develop employee skills and abilities over time. However, content is valuable in that it can be codified and aligned to skills in a more concrete

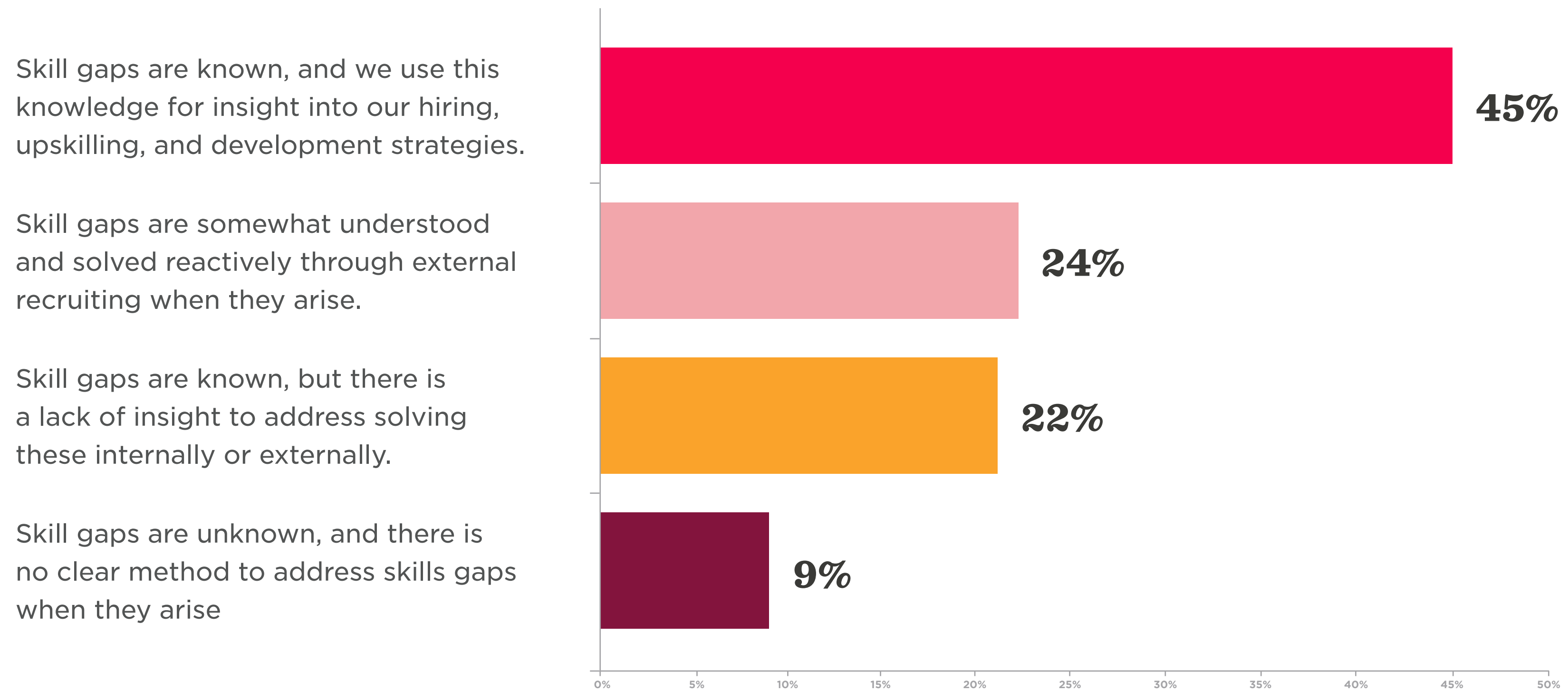
manner than more informal **methods of learning** and serve as a shared baseline from which employees and managers can initiate more informal conversations.

A common method for generating more value from content is the flipped classroom approach. Essentially, learners consume content prior to class so they can use that time for discussion and deeper understanding, not just passively sitting through a lecture. In the workplace, this means learners can apply their new foundation of knowledge and integrate it with their relationships, work tasks, and other aspects of the job. For example, watching a piece of content the day before a manager 1:1 or starting a new project provides an opportunity to ask thoughtful questions about how the information applies in their day to day work. This makes the content more meaningful and easier to retain and use.

It's a very real way to upskill employees and see their performance and learning in a connected manner. That said, fewer than half of employers currently have a plan to address **skill gaps** through upskilling and development strategies.

Figure 3: Organizational responses to skill gaps

Please rate the change readiness of the following groups



Source: Lighthouse Research & Advisory's 2024 Learning, Skills, and Employee Mobility Study (n=1,172)

As employers begin to move towards a level of L&D maturity, they can start using learning as a way to identify and close skill gaps that exist within the business. But even the most well-resourced HR teams don't have the time and expertise to build all of the content necessary to close all of those skill gaps. They need a technology and content partner that can do the heavy lifting.

Making content accessible to every learner

More than half of workers in hybrid/remote roles believe they have to do more learning on their own compared to those working on site.

That statistic is a glaring example of the importance of making learning content accessible to every single employee, regardless of where they may be. 34% of HR leaders say that adapting to hybrid or remote work is a top L&D challenge for their business. One solution to this is the **adoption of a learning management system** (LMS). 76% of employers say that an **LMS** is an essential part of their learning strategy, but if the LMS isn't easy to use

and integrated into the rhythms and routines of daily work, it can be difficult to drive adoption among the workforce. That was a key requirement for Mojang's thousand-plus employees across the globe.

“In our mission to fully empower our employees, we need modern and integrated tools. HiBob's LMS will allow our employees to grow, innovate, and excel in their careers, creating a foundation of progress for our Studio.”

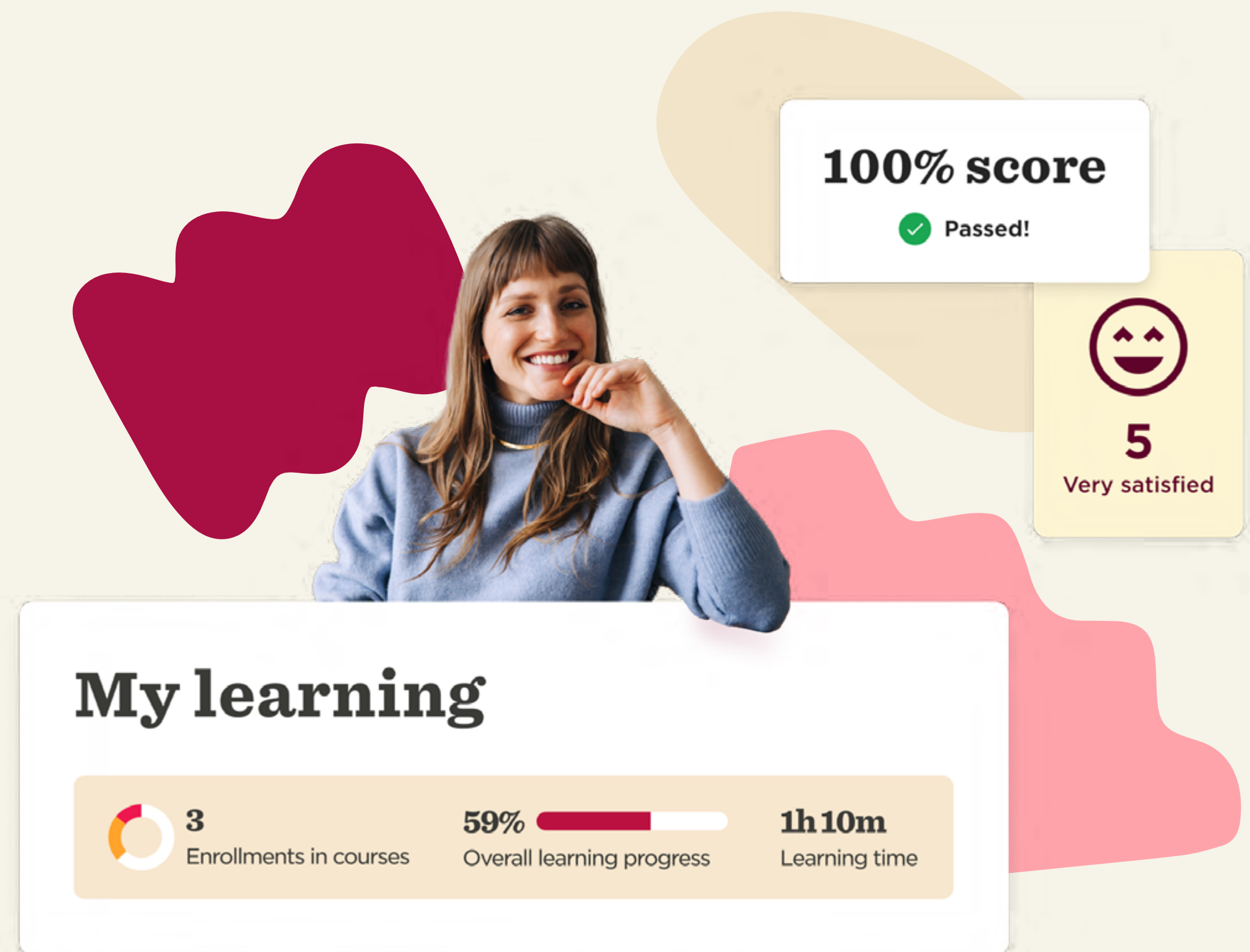
Ola Zajac People Operations Specialist, **Mojang**

Another element of accessibility is relevance. Put simply, the human brain doesn't pay attention to what it deems uninteresting. It's a survival mechanism. If training content doesn't seem relevant to an individual at first glance, the organization may need to work harder to convince that person to participate.

As a result, 52% of employers are currently considering or already planning to adopt personalized learning tailored to employee interests. While it may sound like a big undertaking, the truth is that the day-to-day skills conversations between employees and their leaders are a major factor in this. When employees have skills conversations with their manager at least once a quarter, they are:

- ✓ Nearly twice as likely to have confidence that their skills are aligned with the needs of the business
- ✓ 50% more likely to say their employer keeps track of their work-related skills and abilities
- ✓ About two times more likely to say they get the right types and amount of training to do their job well

Making learning accessible and relevant is a powerful mechanism to drive interest, uptake, and adoption, and a modern, **employee-friendly LMS** is a critical success factor in this equation.



Maintaining a culture of growth

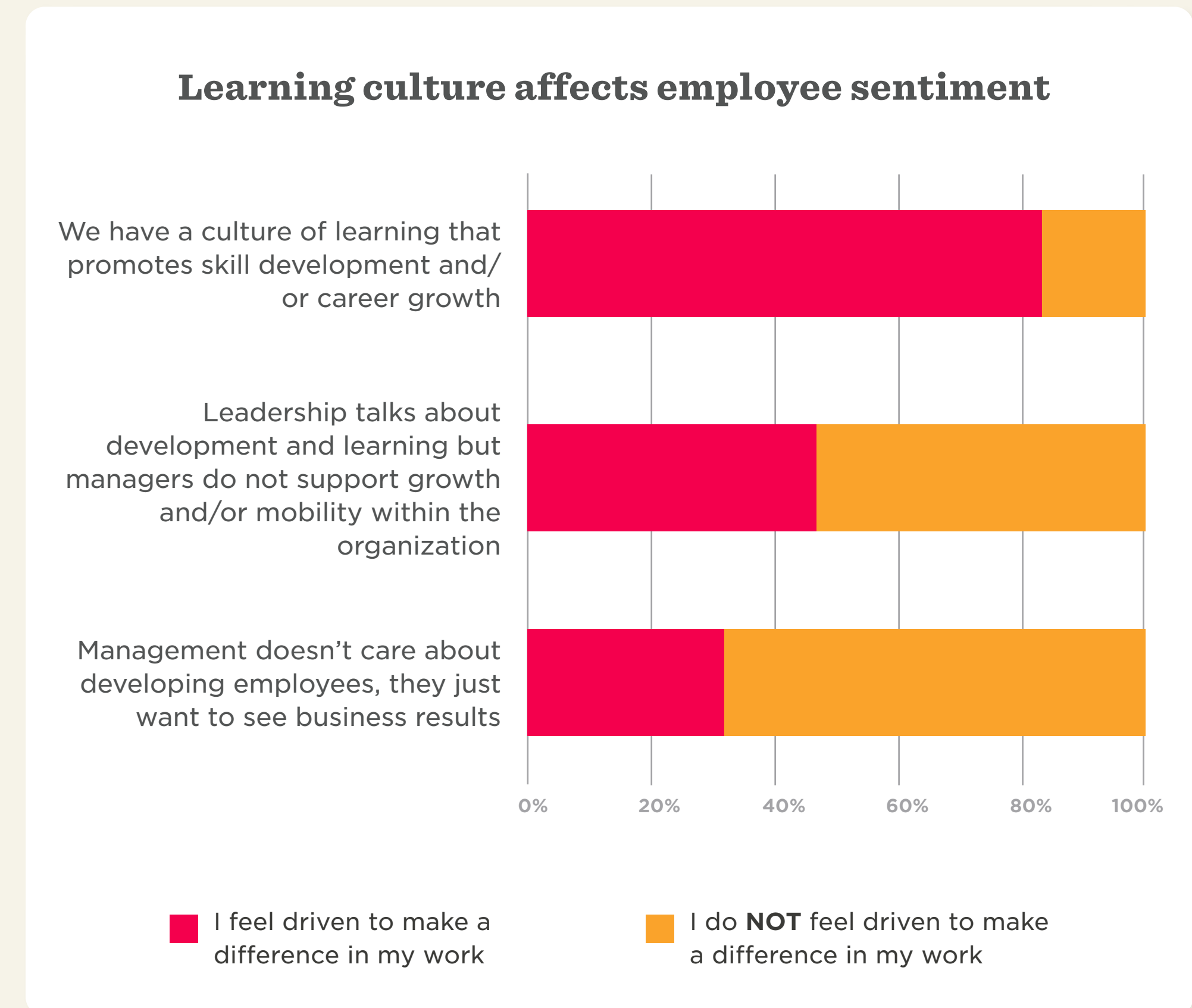
The other elements outlined above are all connected by the intangible, yet impactful, influence of culture. When workers feel like the company's learning culture values each person and their growth, it fundamentally changes their mindset when it comes to work performance.

The right learning culture more than doubles someone's level of drive and engagement at work. And the opposite is also true. Employers that don't prioritize this can discourage and disengage their people.

Have you ever worked in a job where you lost hope? In a recent publication, a prominent psychologist pointed out that relationships should end when one party loses all hope in a successful outcome. Within the research, we see these discouraged workers take on a range of characteristics:

- They are more likely to quit their jobs
- They are less likely to feel like they belong
- They are more likely to feel overwhelmed and worried about their future

Figure 4: How company learning culture influences employee perceptions

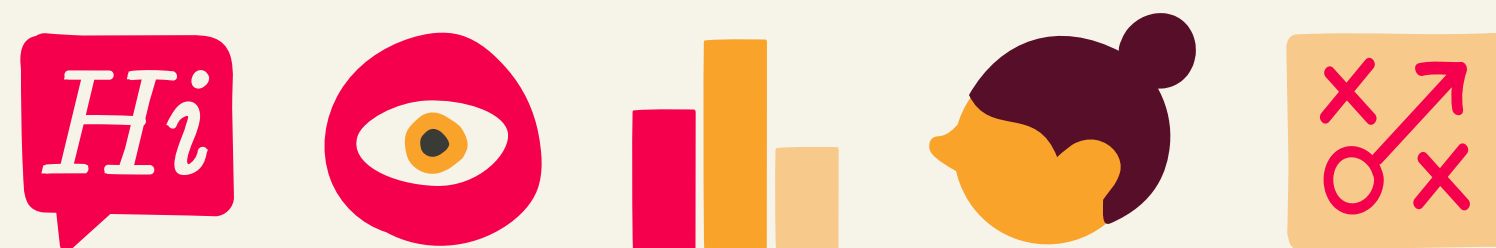


Source: Lighthouse Research & Advisory's 2024 Learning, Skills, and Employee Mobility Study (n=1,172)

Key takeaways

When employers foster a positive learning culture, they see substantial benefits in performance, belonging, and retention. A key component of L&D success isn't just culture, but the technologies and tools that employers offer to the workforce to participate in training and growth. Employees who feel valued and supported in their learning endeavors not only perform better but also stay longer, contributing to a more resilient and well-developed workforce.

The data points are clear: a commitment to learning is a “no regrets” investment that pays off in stronger employee engagement, improved performance, and long-term organizational success.



- ★ **80%** of HR and talent leaders say their company leadership is clear on the skills needed for employees to be relevant in the future, but just 56% of employees say their company invests the resources to develop their future skills.
- ★ **More than half** of workers in hybrid/remote roles believe they have to do more learning on their own compared to those working on site. Regardless of the work schedule and location, employees want to know their company has their back and is willing to help grow their skills for the future.
- ★ **Nine out of 10** employers say that their learning technology affects business agility, and this happens primarily by making performance and development more aligned to company goals and by increasing workforce productivity.
- ★ Employees that have the right types and amount of training are three times more likely to be happy in their job with no plans to quit. At a human level, training is a tangible manifestation of employer support, investment, and concern for the workforce.

About the Research

The 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Employee Mobility Study consists of responses from 1,000 global workers that are currently employed in full-time work in North America (34%), EMEA (40%), and Asia Pacific (26%). It also leverages survey responses from 1,172 global employers (with a minimum of 1,000 employees on staff) from North America (55%), EMEA (21%), and Asia Pacific (24%). Data were gathered in Q2 2024.

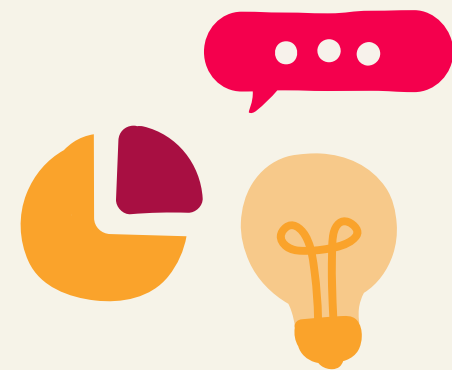
HiBob's Learning survey, conducted on May 17, 2024, gathered insights from 500 respondents involved in Learning and Development (L&D) across various geographies, ages, and industries. Respondents were aged 25 to 34 (23.6%), 35 to 44 (60.2%), 45 to 54 (14.8%), and over 54 (1.4%), and came from the United States, United Kingdom, Israel, Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, and Australia. Gender representation was 42.0% female and 58.0% male.

All respondents were HR professionals responsible for their organization's L&D strategies, with 100% of the companies offering L&D programs. The respondents represented industries including Technology (25.23%), Professional Services (23.36%), Manufacturing (11.21%), and Telecommunications (9.35%).

Meet Bob

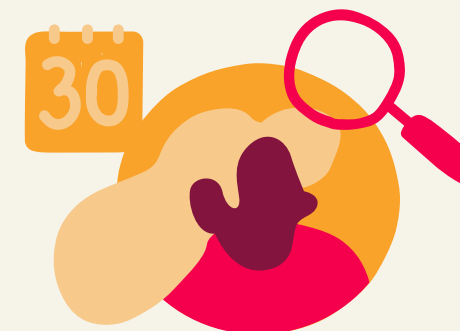
At HiBob, we've built a modern HR platform designed for modern business needs—today and beyond.

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For HR

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