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The Learning Trends Index

Survey Report 4

January 2012



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

GoodPractice, Reed Learning and INL Consultancy have teamed up to produce the UK Learning Trends Index.

This is the fourth set of results. The report provides an overview of the key trends that have emerged across the Learning and Development (L&D) industry during the two year period from May 2010 to May 2012 and beyond. The fifth survey is scheduled to take place during May 2012, and will continue to be run every six months following that in order to track the industry.

1.2 Composition of the Learning Trends Index

The survey covers four main questions. Appendix 6.1 contains a full list of the responses.

Question 1 asked respondents to rate their expectations for the coming six months around eight topics, including resourcing for L&D, its impact and perception across the wider business.

Question 2 asked respondents to indicate what impact the economy will have on their learning function in the coming six months around eleven topics.

Question 3 explored the changes respondents expected in their allocated budget against different categories in the coming six months around eight topics.

Question 4 asked respondents to identify the top three business drivers which will impact on their learning department, and the top three issues on which they plan to focus activity on over the coming six months.

1.3 Report context

As invitations to participate in the fourth UK Learning Trends survey were sent out in late 2011, the UK's economic picture offered little signs of festive cheer. The UK is still struggling to recover from the worst financial crisis since the 1930s. Prospects for economic growth remain bleak, as the fragile global economic situation and the Eurozone debt crisis continue to dominate headlines and threaten growth prospects not only in the UK but across Europe. Prime Minister David Cameron admitted that 'Britain faces a long and slow road to economic recovery'.¹

According to the Office of National Statistics, in November 2011 the UK inflation rate was 4.8%, which was well above the Bank of England's target of 2%. Although the UK economy had grown by a modest 0.5% in the third quarter of 2011, unemployment had increased to 8.3% in December 2011. This was up 0.4% from the previous quarter with 2.64 million people now out of work.² According to reports from The Guardian, this figure represents a 17 year high in UK unemployment, as predicted improvements in the private sector have largely failed to offset widespread public sector job cuts.³

In November 2011, Chancellor George Osborne published the Autumn Statement, which contained a raft of measures designed to kick-start the UK economy and avoid a 'double-dip' recession. These proposals included far-reaching changes to the UK pensions landscape, widespread public sector spending cuts and the admission that the UK's budget deficit would not be eliminated by 2015.⁴ This led to a national day of strike action on the 30th November 2011, with more than 2 million people protesting.

¹ These comments were made in David Cameron's keynote speech to the CBI Annual Conference on 21 November 2011. Full coverage is available at: www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/cbi-annual-conference-2011/media-reaction-to-david-camerons-speech-to-the-cbi-1/ (January 2012).

² Office of National Statistics, www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html, (November 2011).

³ Katie Allen, 'UK unemployment hits 17 year high', The Guardian, (14 December 2011.) Available at: www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/dec/14/uk-unemployment-hits-17-year-high

⁴ The Coalition Government had previously indicated that the UK's debt deficit would be cleared by 2015. Osborne's Autumn Statement confirmed this would now not happen until 2017 at the earliest.

1.4 Methodology

As with previous reports, the survey questionnaire was developed using an online survey reporting tool.⁵ For more information see www.surveymonkey.com. All responses were collected online during November and December 2011 and were analysed using Microsoft Excel. For the fourth survey we sent out invitations to a population of around 1200 L&D professionals, drawn from client and non-client contacts of GoodPractice, INL Consultancy and Reed Learning.

We received a total of 250 responses which indicates a response rate of 21%. The participation rate has increased by 9% since the previous survey in May 2011. It should be noted that participation rates have continued to rise with each survey. We hope that this engagement from the wider L&D community will continue to rise in the future. We would like to thank all those who participated for their continued support and ideas about how we can improve the survey.

For clarity and ease of interpretation, we have excluded the data received from international respondents. We also excluded data from employee/consultant level respondents. Of the remaining 125 responses, 76% came from the private sector, 13% from the public sector and 11% from the not-for-profit sector.

32% of the above sample came from individuals in a director or VP level L&D post, 30% from senior management L&D posts, and 38% from management level L&D posts.

31% of the above sample came from organisations with less than 50 employees. 18% had 50-250 employees, 15% had 251-1000 employees, 10% had 1001-2000 employees and 26% of responses came from organisations with more than 2000 employees. We will highlight any differences in the results that emerge from organisations of different sizes as appropriate throughout the report.

⁵ Survey Monkey was used to develop the survey and collect data from respondents. For more information see www.surveymonkey.com.

2. Executive Summary

L&D remains cautiously optimistic about the future

The aim of the UK Learning Trends Index is to help L&D professionals stay up to date with the state of their industry and the key issues their peers are facing. Given the difficult economic picture, gaining an understanding of the challenges facing L&D has never been more important. Specific objectives were to determine the areas which will be the main focus of attention for L&D in the coming year and to consider how resourcing for different aspects of L&D activity has changed since the last survey in May 2011. It was also important to highlight any notable changes to L&D's approach to delivering learning, including the role played by technology-based approaches.

2011 was undeniably a difficult year for UK businesses. Many organisations are still suffering from the negative impacts of the recession. Consequently, all business functions have faced a renewed pressure to prove their worth and deliver tangible results. L&D departments are no exception. However, many L&D teams have experienced the double blow of reduced headcount and reduced financial support for their learning and development initiatives. Yet, despite these difficult operational circumstances the latest survey shows that confidence in L&D's ability to meet business needs and support corporate objectives remains broadly positive. Furthermore, L&D is becoming increasingly business-focused, channelling its efforts into the areas which will provide maximum support to the business in ever more innovative ways.

The findings are summarised below in terms of L&D's:

- resources, impact and perception
- efficiency, approaches and embracing technology
- focus

2.1 L&D resourcing, impact and perception

- In this section, the most noticeable trend is towards 'no change' in many areas. For example, L&D's ability to **meet the learning needs** of the business has remained consistent with the previous survey, with around 46% predicting no change in this area.
- Furthermore, L&D's perceived **impact on corporate performance** continues to be positive, with 65% saying it would improve in the coming six months. L&D's **positive status** as a **key strategic contributor** has also remained consistent, with around 60% of Learning Managers saying that it will improve in the coming months.
- A similar picture can be found across the remainder of the issues addressed by Question 1. For example, 37% of respondents report no change in the **availability of resources** for L&D (-5%), 35% report a reduction in resource provision (+3%) and 25% say there has been no change (0%). Furthermore, 35% feel that the ability to **attract talent** to their team has improved (+5%) and 49% see no change (-5%).

2.2 L&D's efficiency and approaches

- A number of issues arise in this section in relation to L&D's perceived efficiency, its choice of approach in delivering learning and the extent to which **technology** is embraced. The influence of technology (e.g. e-learning and virtual delivery methods) remains consistently high in this survey, with around 83% of respondents predicting an increase in this area. Notably, 30% of L&D practitioners predict a major increase in the use of technology to deliver learning over the next six months.
- **Staffing levels** within L&D departments also remain comparable with previous survey results, with 36% anticipating a reduction in staffing levels (0%), 52% reporting no change (+5%) and 12% saying it will increase (-5%).
- 57% of Learning Managers now predict that budget spend on **supporting informal learning** will increase in the coming months. This is a noticeable increase of 10% on the previous survey figure. Financial support for **technology-based learning** interventions has remained positive, with 65% (0%) saying that spending is likely to increase.
- It is interesting to note the relationship between spend on **outsourced training delivery** compared to **in-house trainers**. Spending on in-house instruction has decreased by 12% since the last survey, while support for outsourced training has risen by 12%.
- 56% of Learning Managers say that **social media** will play an increasingly important role as an integral part of the learning mix over the next six months. This is an increase of 10% on the previous survey figure.

2.3 Areas of focus for L&D

- When considering the most critical areas of L&D focus for the next six months, **leadership development** remains the most important area of focus at 45%. Although leadership development continues to be ranked above all other issues, the gap between it and the next most critical issues (namely management performance, performance management and talent management) has closed by a noticeable 11%.
- In the latest survey, **management performance**, **performance management** and **talent management and retention** are ranked equal second in terms of importance for L&D at around 34% respectively.
- This section also asked respondents to identify the top three business drivers that would have the most impact on their L&D function over the next six months. **Improving organisational execution and efficiency** is still the most critical business driver for L&D departments at 67% (-13%).
- **Employee engagement** is now ranked in second place as a key business driver for L&D departments, at 63% (+6%). In the previous survey it was ranked third at 57%.
- **Revenue growth** has overtaken **cost reduction** and containment as the third most important issue for L&D at 48% (+10%). Cost reduction still continues to be ranked highly, and is now found in fourth place at 44% (-8%).

3. Key Findings

From our perspective, the key findings that emerge from the latest survey are:

3.1 Organisational efficiency remains paramount

Maintaining organisational efficiency and execution remains the top business driver for L&D by a considerable margin. This reflects the difficult economic circumstances and, consequently, L&D's strong focus on supporting organisational stability and growth. As with many other business functions, the impact of the recession upon L&D departments has been significant. How L&D responds and performs during this period of economic uncertainty will have a profound impact upon an organisation's ability to survive and grow. The pressure on L&D to provide value and be cost-effective is now central to its very existence. This focus on organisational efficiency demonstrates a move towards a more commercial, results-driven approach to learning provision.

3.2 Leadership development is a key priority, but other areas gain in importance

As with the previous three sets of Learning Trends Index results, leadership development has remained at the top of the L&D agenda. However, the gap between leadership development and other key areas of focus for L&D appears to be closing. Talent management, performance management and the development of middle and senior managers have all experienced a renewed focus. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, L&D appears to be targeting its activity and impact upon the groups of employees who are most critical for success. This has always included the senior leadership group, but the development of other high potentials within the management population also underpins organisational success. Secondly, performance management has also increased in importance for L&D. In the past 12 months, many organisations have experienced periods of downsizing and restructuring. There is now a greater need to effectively manage performance into the future, to ensure that remaining employees remain motivated to deliver high performance.

3.3 Renewed support for informal learning

In this survey, Learning Managers have strongly highlighted the link between informal learning and employee development. From an L&D perspective, the distinction between formal and informal learning is important. As GoodPractice CEO Peter Casebow explains: “Formal learning is going on training courses, e-learning, coaching programmes and so forth. Informal learning is a natural process of absorbing skills, seeking knowledge, information and understanding from our environment and those around us.” Although many UK organisations were initially slow to identify and harness the benefits that could be gained from informal learning, the latest survey shows increased support, both in terms of reliance on informal learning as part of the overall learning mix, and also in terms of predicted spend over the coming months.

3.4 Social media raises its game

What is also evident from this set of results is the role played by social media within the L&D arena. Many respondents commented on increased support for social media within a dedicated L&D strategy, alongside increased financial support for social media related initiatives. As interest in, and demand for, social media to support workplace learning gathers pace, L&D’s role is about encouraging and directing the use of relevant social media tools so that they have a positive impact on learning and also on organisational performance.

4. Summary of responses to the four main questions

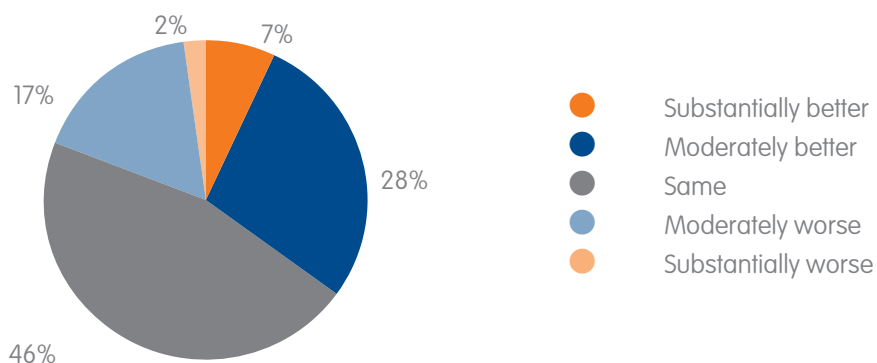
4.1 Question 1 asked respondents to rate their expectations for the coming six months around eight topics.⁶

When considered against the previous three sets of survey results, the latest responses to Question 1 provide a comprehensive overview of the confidence and status of the L&D function over the last two years and into the future.⁷

4.1.1 Ability to meet learning needs

As shown in Figure 1 below, 46% of Learning Managers expect no change in L&D's ability to meet learning needs in the coming six months. Furthermore, 28% of Learning Managers predict that their function will perform moderately better in this area compared to the previous six months. These figures are broadly consistent with the previous survey.

Figure 1: Your ability to meet learning needs

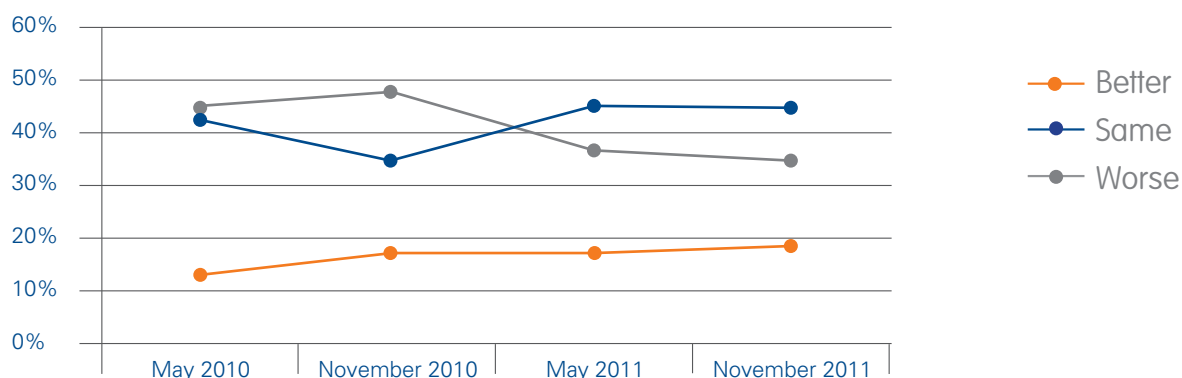


⁶ A full list of the responses to Question 1 can be found in Appendix 1.

⁷ The three previous UK Learning Trends survey data were collected on May 2010, November 2010 and May 2011.

Figure 2 below gives an overview of the responses received in this area across the period of the four surveys. The picture that emerges in relation to L&D's ability to meet learning needs is one of cautious optimism. The clearest trend is towards 'no change' in the function's ability to meet the learning needs of the business, with a gradual overall decline in the responses reporting that L&D would be less able to meet learning needs across the period of the four surveys from May 2010 to November 2011.

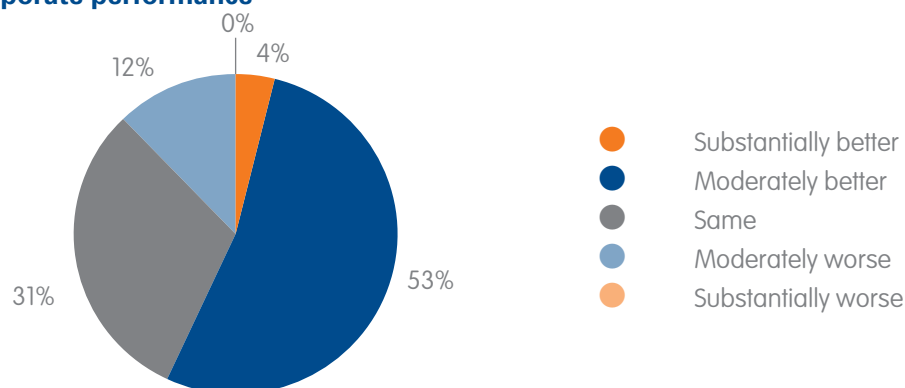
Figure 2: Your ability to meet learning needs overview



4.1.2 Impact on corporate performance

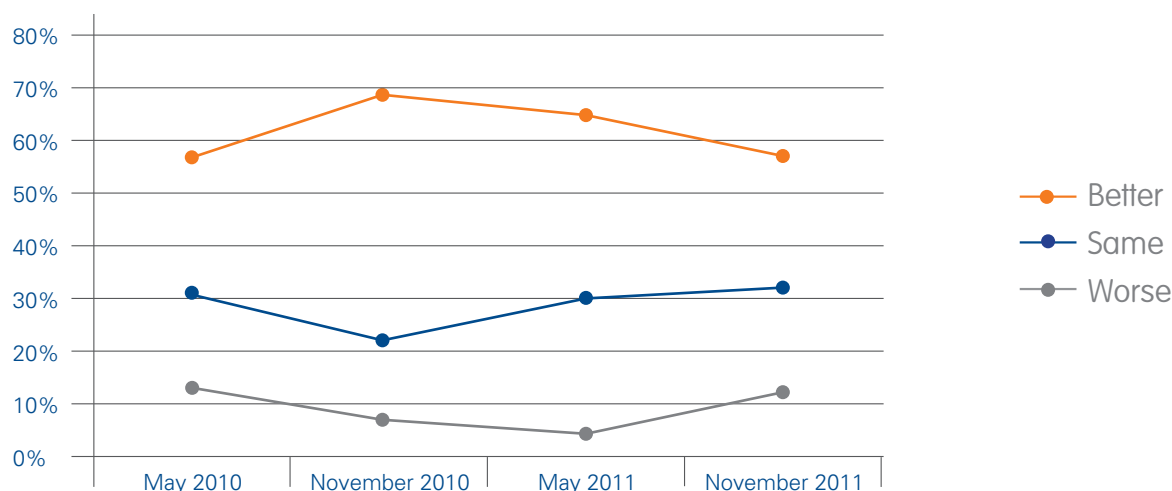
As Figure 3 below illustrates, 57% of respondents report that L&D's impact on corporate performance will improve in the coming six months. 31% see no change in this area and 12% feel that L&D's impact on corporate performance has worsened, which is an increase of 7% from the previous survey conducted in May 2011.

Figure 3: Your impact on corporate performance



As illustrated by Figure 4 below, analysis of the results across all four surveys gives a generally consistent picture. 50-60% of respondents report an improved impact on corporate performance throughout the entire period (May 2010 – November 2011), around 30% see no change and 10% report that L&D has had a reduced impact.

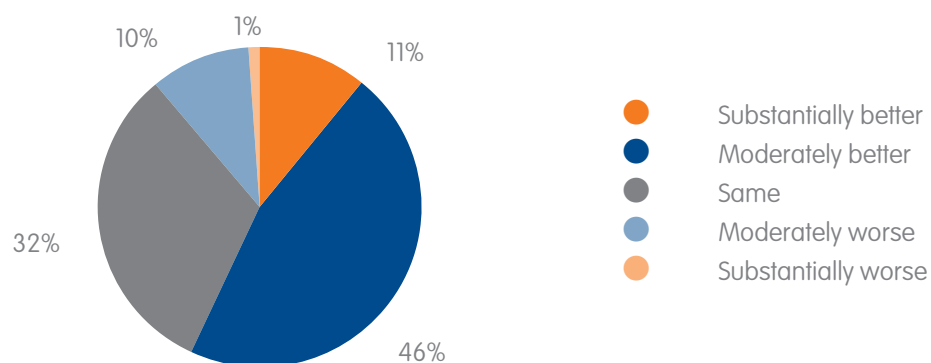
Figure 4: Your impact on corporate performance overview



4.1.3 Status as a key strategic contributor

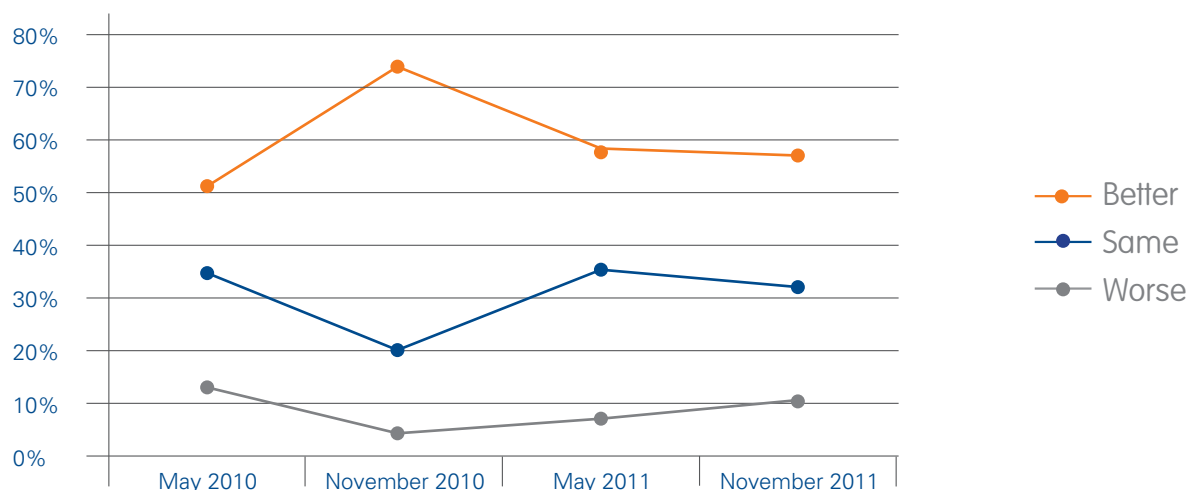
Figure 5 below shows the latest survey results in relation to L&D's status as a key strategic contributor. 57% feel that L&D's position would be better in the coming six months than it was over the previous six months, which is generally consistent with the previous survey figure of 59%. 32% see no change in this area (compared to the previous figure of 35%) and 11% felt that L&D's status as a strategic contributor had become worse (an increase of 5% when compared to the last survey).

Figure 5: Your status as a key contributor



Considering the results across the four surveys conducted to date, Figure 6 below shows that between May and November 2010 there was a pronounced spike of optimism (from 50% to 75%) regarding L&D's status. During this period, the number of responses indicating L&D's status as considerably better rose by 25%. However, from May 2011 onwards the picture has remained stable. Since May 2011, around 60% of Learning Managers say that L&D's overall status as a key strategic contributor is better, 35% see no real change and 5% say that it is worse.

Figure 6: Your status as a key strategic contributor overview



A similar picture of consistency can be found across the remainder of the issues covered in Question 1. For example, 37% of respondents report no change in the availability of resources (-5%), 35% report a reduction of resource provision (+3%) and 25% say there has been no change (0%). Furthermore, 35% now say that their ability to attract talent to their team has improved (+5%) and 49% see no change (-5%).

It is evident from these results that many L&D practitioners feel that the function's status as a key strategic partner in the business is yet to be fully realised within the context of the recession. At the present time, L&D departments are very much focused upon organisational necessities. As economic growth remains sluggish and competition tough, learning strategies have become focused on supporting immediate work priorities and helping the business face the challenges presented by the recession effectively. Only when the success (or otherwise) of these initiatives becomes clear might we begin to see an upturn in L&D's strength as a key strategic partner, rather than as a cost to be reduced and contained.

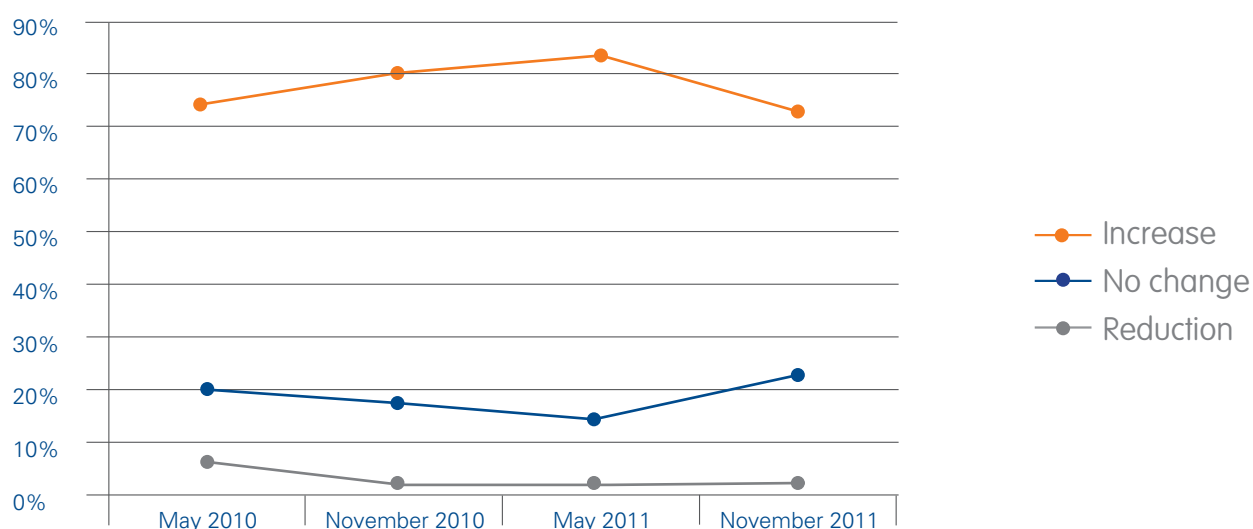
4.2 Question 2 asked respondents to indicate the impact the economy will have on their learning function in the coming six months around twelve topics.⁸

Questions in this section asked respondents to consider how the economic situation has affected L&D's efficiency, overall approaches to learning and the use of technology. The results continue to illustrate a consistent picture across the L&D industry as a whole.

4.2.1 Shift to using technology-based learning (e.g. e-learning/virtual delivery)

As shown by Figure 7 below, around 70% of respondents to the latest survey predict an increase in the use of technology such as e-learning and virtual methods to deliver learning interventions. This figure has remained stable across the period of the four surveys from May 2010 to November 2011. Less than 5% of respondents report a reduction in the use of technology to deliver learning, a figure which has remained consistent since May 2010. This trend highlights the continuing relevance and importance of using technology to deliver learning, particularly during the recession, when achieving both value for money and a return on investment are of paramount importance.

Figure 7: Shift to using technology-based learning

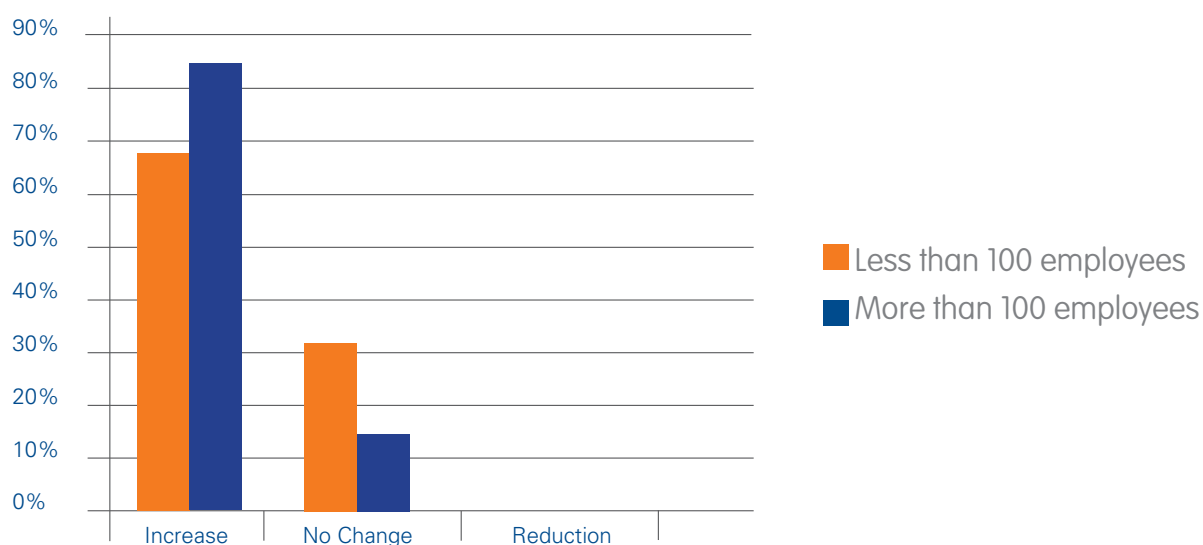


⁸ A full list of the responses to Question 2 can be found in Appendix 1.

Figure 8 below compares how organisations of differing sizes are using technology to deliver learning. An interesting issues is that larger organisations seem to have a greater inclination towards increasing their reliance on technology to deliver learning. 84% of respondents from large organisations report an increase in this area, compared to 67% of smaller organisations.

This makes sense, as technology allows learning to be delivered at greater economies of scale (when compared with face-to-face learning delivery) at significantly lower cost. Larger organisations may have a greater inclination towards implementing technology-based learning, or it may be that smaller organisations have already invested in this area, and consequently see a much smaller increase. What is clear, however, is that as L&D departments face reduced budgets and increased pressure to deliver, using a blend of technology-driven solutions such as e-learning, a dedicated LMS and other forms of virtual delivery can help to enhance the quality of L&D's offering.

Figure 8: Comparison of technology-based learning



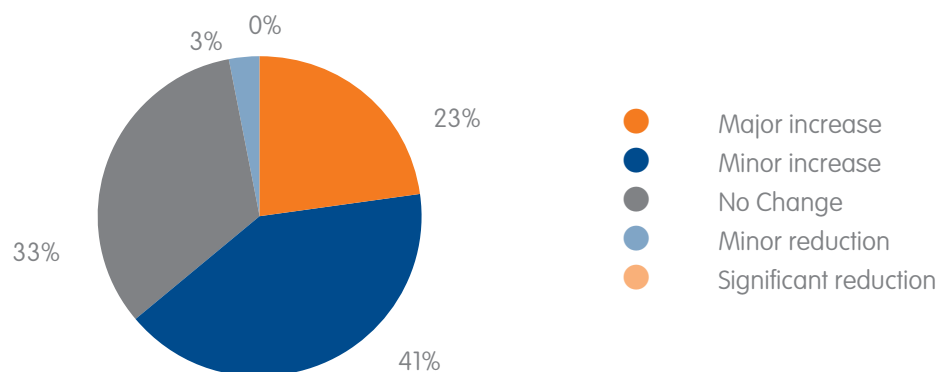
4.2.2 Travel for learners

It is interesting to note that between 50 and 60% of respondents report an overall reduction in travel for learners throughout the full survey period from May 2010 to November 2011. This is also combined with a reduction in travel for trainers and consultants, which has continued to decline over the whole survey period. This can partly be explained by technology-based learning taking on a greater role, but also by L&D's efforts to become more business-focused. Learning interventions often mean key employees taking time out from essential day-to-day business operations. L&D should ideally respond to this by showing flexibility, e.g. by providing options which have minimum impact on operations such as on-site evening classes, half-day courses or weekend training, supplemented by technology-based and informal learning support options where appropriate.

4.2.3 Reliance on informal learning

Informal learning is all the learning that takes place away from organised formal training and it accounts for around 70% of all learning within organisations today.⁹ As illustrated by Figure 9 below, L&D's reliance upon informal learning continues to be important, with 41% seeing a minor increase and 23% a major increase in this area. 33% report no change in the use of informal learning.

Figure 9: Reliance on Informal learning

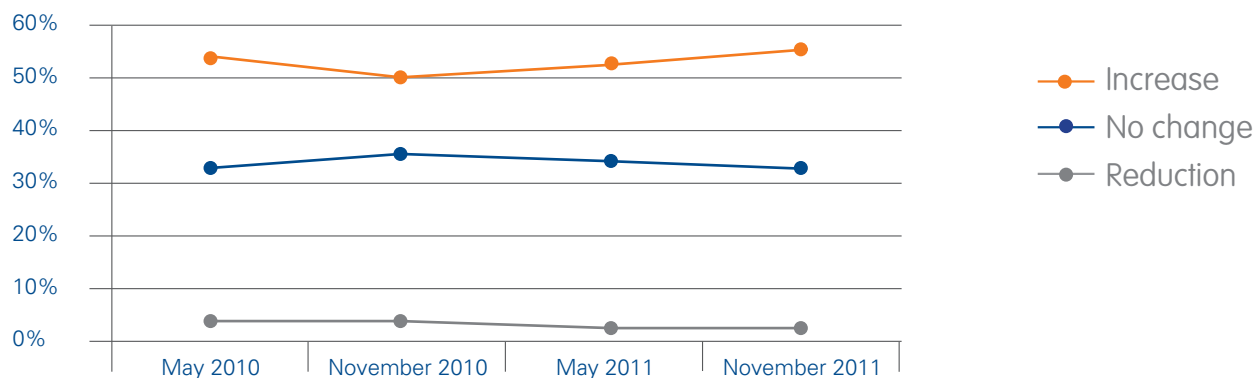


Informal learning should ideally be part of an organisation's learning strategy. 'L&D's role should not be to try to 'manage' informal learning, but to find out what informal learning is taking place in order to build up a picture of how it is contributing (or otherwise) to organisational performance. L&D should strive to promote and encourage people to engage with effective forms of informal learning, and to provide high quality resources for informal experts and mentors.

⁹ The 70/20/10 Model is an L&D model developed by Michael M. Lombardo and Robert W. Eichinger for the Center for Creative Leadership. They argue that 70% of development is derived from working on challenging job-related job tasks, experiences and problem-solving, 20% is derived from developmental relationships and feedback and a further 10% from courses and reading. For more information about the 70/20/10 Model see www.ccl.org.

As illustrated by Figure 10 below, the picture in relation to informal learning has remained broadly consistent across the period of the four surveys. Informal learning has increasingly become part of the fabric of organisational learning. Between 60 and 70% of respondents saw an increase in their reliance upon informal learning from May 2010 to November 2011.

Figure 10: Reliance on Informal learning overview

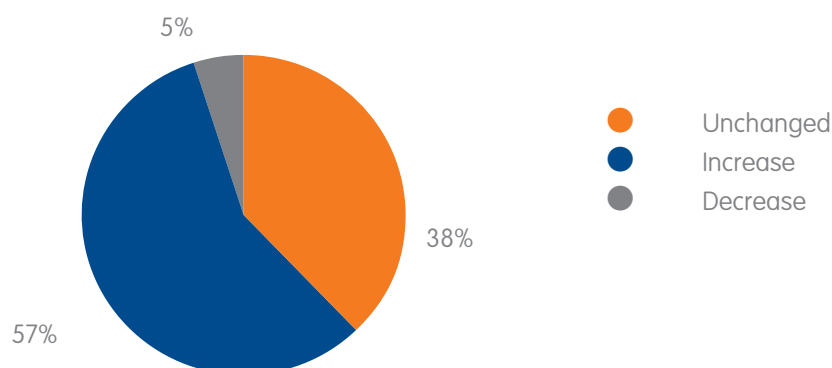


4.3 Question 3: Thinking about your budget spending in the next six months for the following activities, do you think it will increase, decrease or stay the same? ¹⁰

4.3.1 Informal learning support

Financial support for informal learning initiatives continues to be positive. As shown by Figure 11 below, in the latest survey 57% of Learning Managers said that budget allocation for informal learning would increase in the coming six months. This is a noticeable increase of 10% on the previous survey figure. 38% of Learning Managers said spending on informal learning would remain the same (-14%). Only 5% reported that spending on informal learning would decrease.

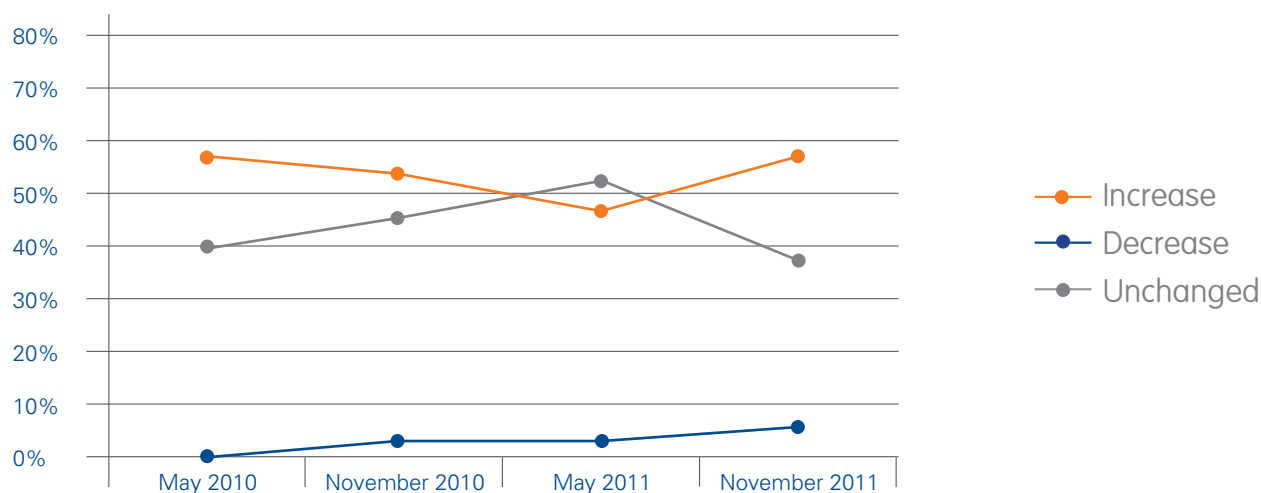
Figure 11: Informal learning support



¹⁰ A full list of the responses to Question 3 can be found in Appendix 1.

Figure 12 below compares the support for informal learning across the duration of the four surveys. Since May 2011, organisational support for informal learning appears to have risen. It is clear that as more traditional forms of training delivery (e.g. face-to-face classroom based courses and workshops) come under pressure from both financial and efficiency perspectives, informal learning methods such as on-the-job learning, peer-to-peer coaching and social networking tools are becoming increasingly prevalent. These results may be an indication that many organisations are beginning to shift their focus away from top-down, formal learning programmes to support the natural flow of learning across the organisation. It will be interesting to note whether this positive support for informal learning continues into future surveys.

Figure 12: Informal learning support overview



4.3.2 Support for technology-based learning (e.g. e-learning programme development)

As shown by Figure 13 below, the impact of technology-based learning delivery continues to be significant. In the latest survey 65% of respondents say that spending will increase in this area in the coming six months, while 30% report no change. These figures are consistent with the previous survey.

Figure 13: Support for technology-based learning

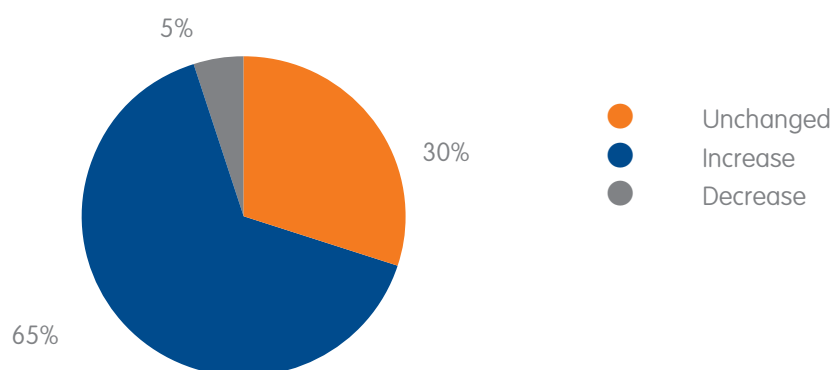
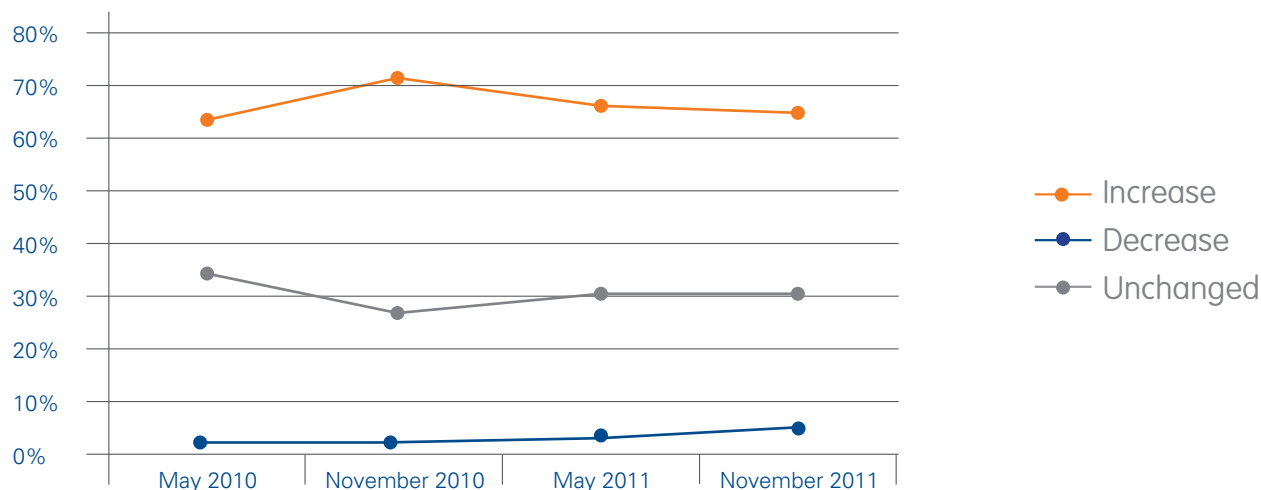


Figure 14 demonstrates that financial support for technology-based learning has remained high throughout the duration of the four surveys, with between 65 and 70% of Learning Managers reporting that spending will increase in this area. The challenge for L&D departments will be to provide technology-based learning tools in a way that is cost-effective, and which directly addresses the specific needs of learners.

Figure 14: Support for technology-based learning overview



4.3.3 Support for in-house trainers and outsourced delivery

It is interesting to note the relationship between spending on outsourced training delivery compared to in-house trainers. As shown in Figure 15 below, spending on outsourced training has risen by 12% since the previous survey, while Figure 16 shows that spending on in-house instruction has decreased by a similar amount.

Figure 15: Spending on outsourced training overview

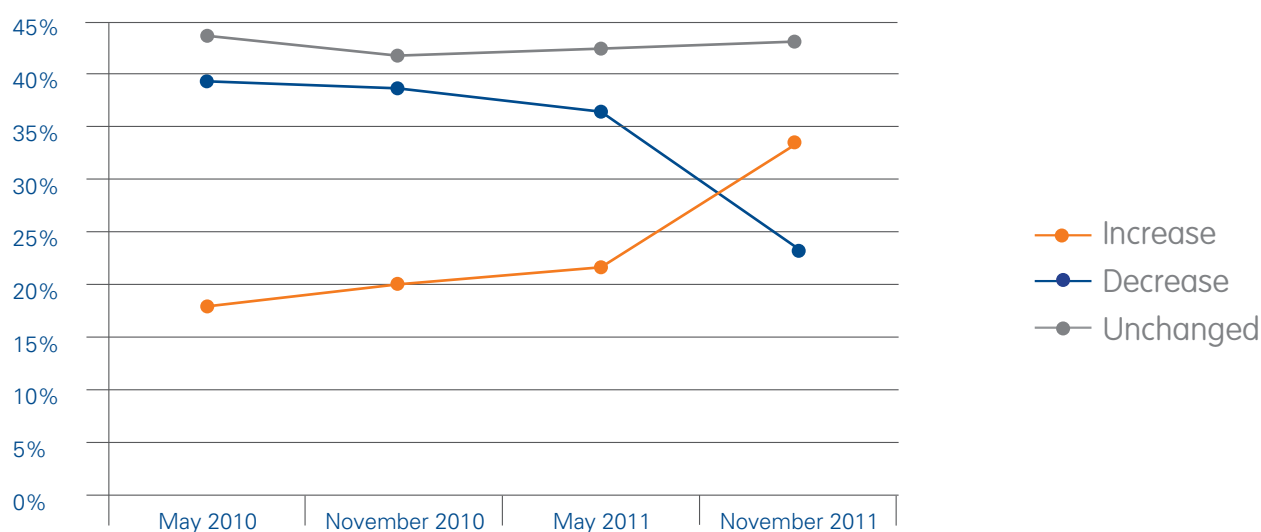
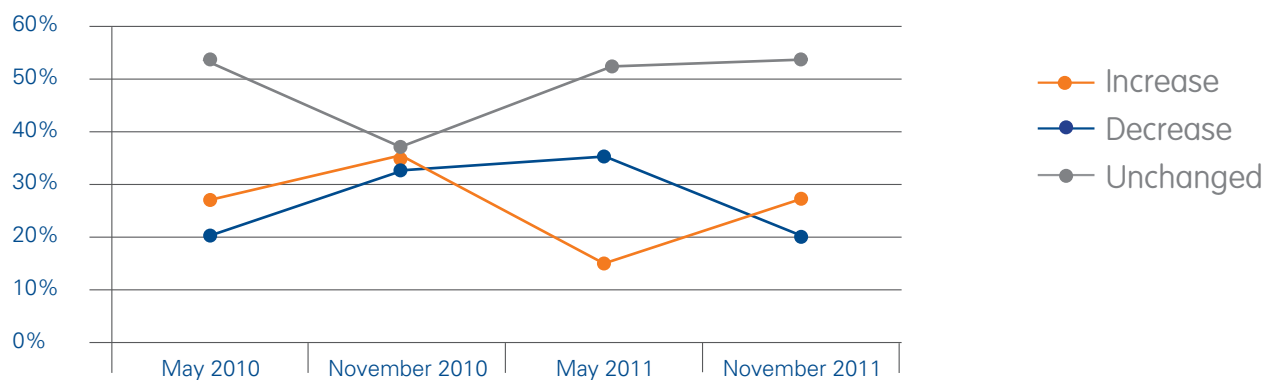


Figure 16: Spending on in-house delivery overview

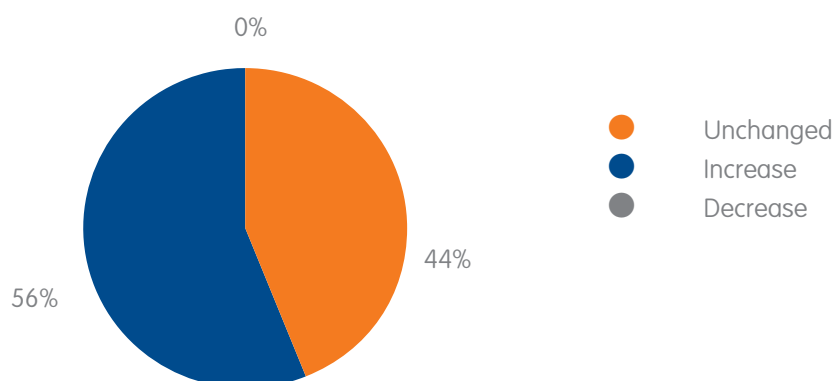


One possible explanation for this could be an increase in internal demand for outsourced training options. At the beginning of the financial year, many L&D departments faced significant cost reduction. The impact of this was that expensive externally provided training courses were eliminated in a bid to contain costs. However, as internal demand for them has risen, many organisations have gradually re-introduced external training options for key groups of employees.

4.3.4 Use of social media¹¹

As shown in Figure 17 below, 56% of Learning Managers predict an increase in the use of social media tools in their learning and development solutions in the coming six months. This represents an increase of 10% on the previous survey figure. This highlights an important shift that is taking place within many organisations. The emergence of social media has meant that everyone now has access to a range of tools which can support and enhance the learning experience. L&D appears to be rising to this challenge by integrating a variety of social media tools into its learning solutions.

Figure 17: Use of social media



To illustrate this point, Clive Shepard of the eLearning Network says there are four main channels where Learning Managers can potentially direct the use of social media:¹²

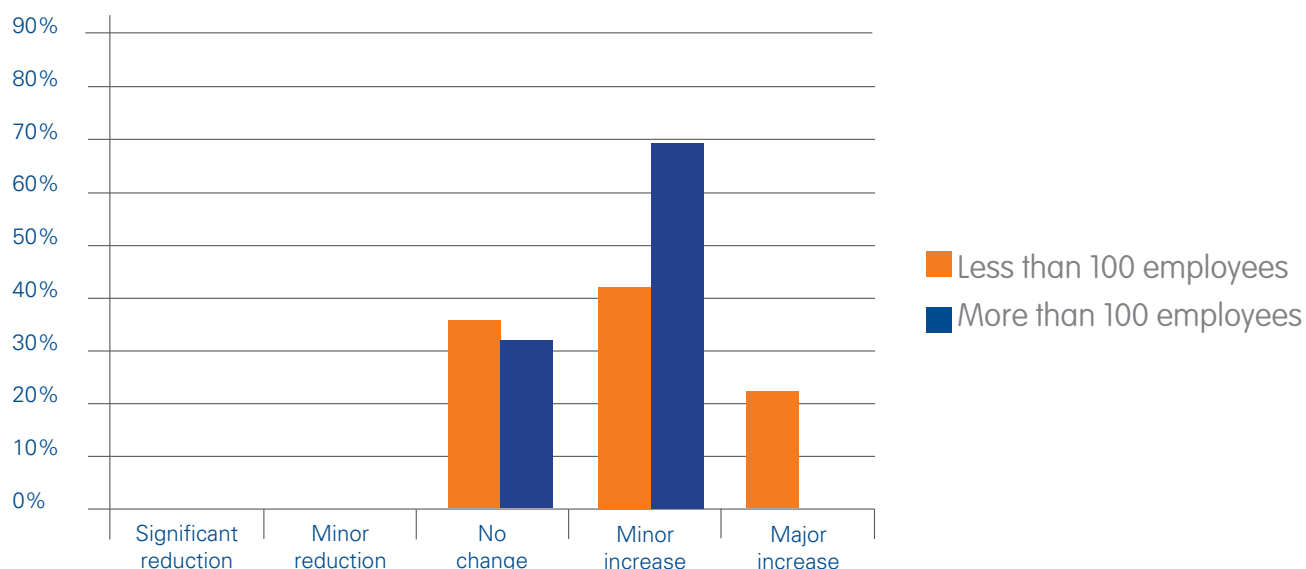
- **Formal learning.** The use of forums to discuss issues and share ideas, sharing research using podcasts and videos.
- **Non-formal learning.** Using communities of practice to share new ideas and debate issues, and micro-blogging to update peers on new developments quickly.
- **On-demand learning.** Using social networks to find sources of expertise or offer expertise to others, content sharing (text, podcasts and screencasts).
- **Experiential learning.** Blogging about personal experiences.

¹¹ Social media is a collective term for online applications that allow groups and individuals to create content. This content can be used for the purposes of learning, communication, collaboration and informal sharing. Examples of social media tools include blogs, microblogs such as Twitter, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn) and wikis.

¹² To find out more about Clive Shepard's work, visit <http://thirdsectorsocialmedia.com/2011/06/ignore-social-media-for-ld-at-your-peril/> (January 2011).

It is interesting to compare the usage and impact of social media in large and small organisations. As shown in Figure 18 below, neither group predicts any reduction in support for, nor usage of, social media tools to support learning over the next few months. While 70% of Learning Managers from larger organisations with more than 1000 employees report a minor increase in support for social media, none predicts a major increase. Conversely, more than 20% of Learning Managers from smaller organisations of less than 1000 employees predict a major increase in social media in the coming six month period.

Figure 18: Comparison of social media use



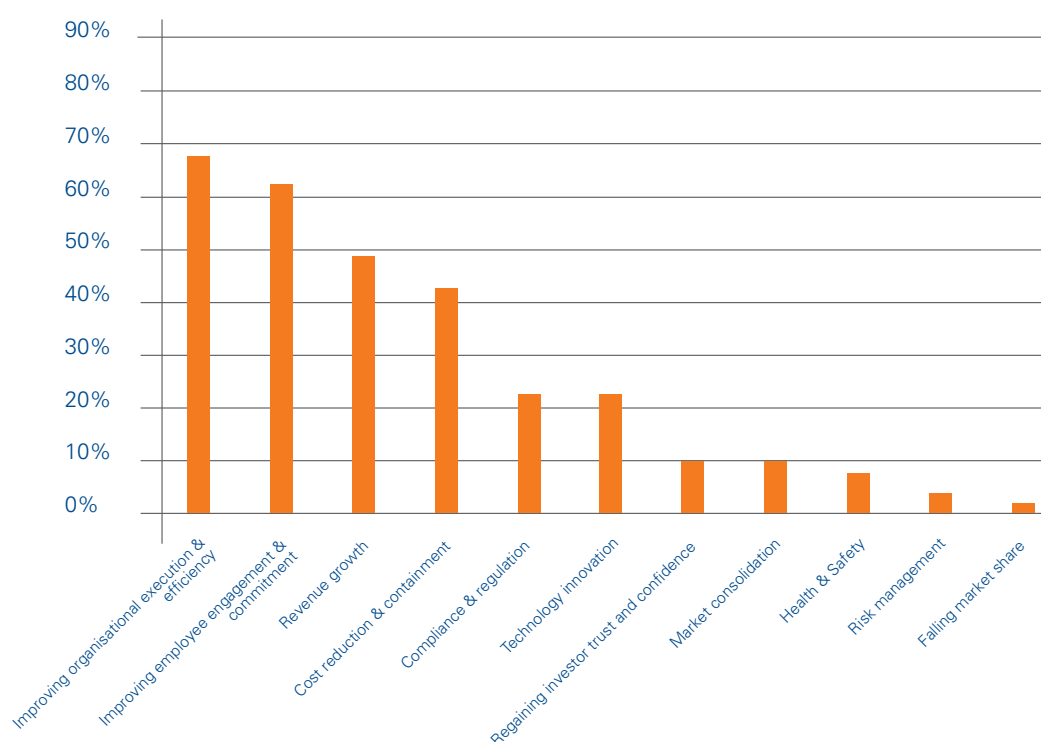
One explanation for this difference is that smaller organisations face less bureaucracy and red tape when it comes to their employees using social media tools. When the social media phenomenon began, many large corporate organisations responded by simply blocking access to any social media site, without understanding the potential benefits of adopting an L&D-focused social media strategy. Although there are some notable exceptions to this rule, these results show that smaller organisations are perhaps less risk averse when it comes to encouraging employees to use social networking for learning (and other business related purposes such as networking and team communications).

4.4 Question 4: Business drivers and key priorities for L&D

4.4.1 What are the top three key business drivers which will impact on your learning department in the next six months?

We asked Learning Managers to identify the top three business drivers they felt would impact on their L&D department in the next six months. The latest results in Figure 19 below demonstrate that improving organisational execution and efficiency continues to be significantly ranked ahead of all the other issues at 67%. This represents a decrease of 13% on the previous survey figure. This demonstrates that although the pressure upon L&D to deliver interventions which add value and improve performance remains strong, attention has been diverted to other key areas. For example, improving employee engagement and commitment is of particular importance for Learning Managers, and is ranked a close second at 63%, (+5%).

Figure 19: Key business drivers

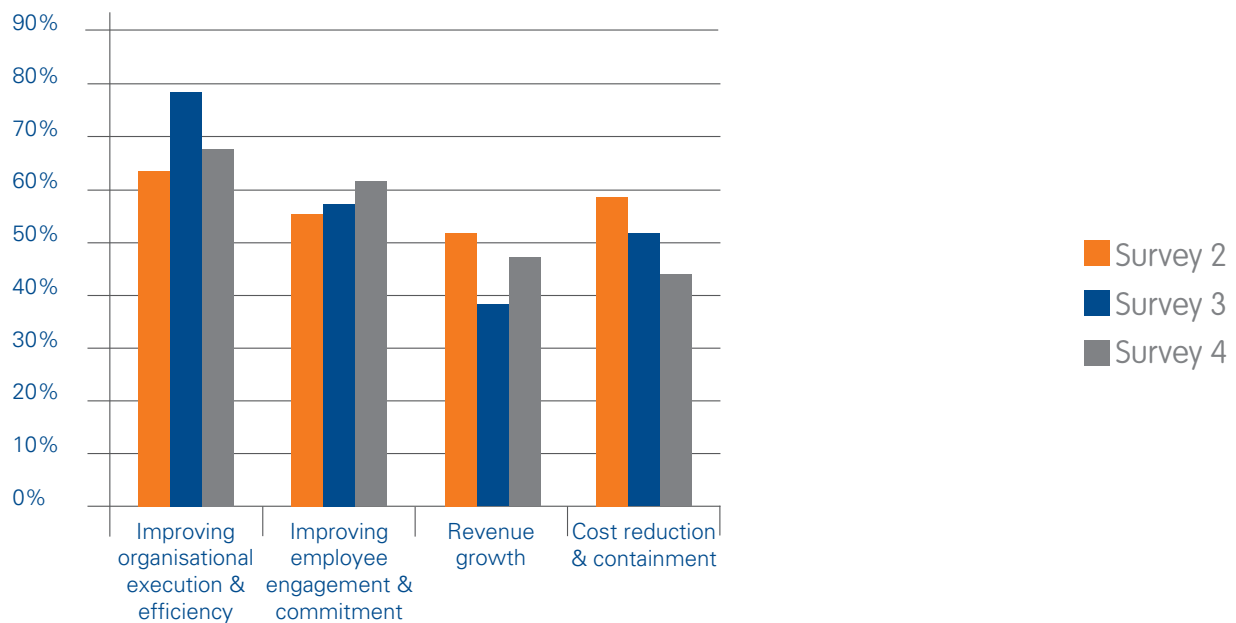


In the latest survey, revenue growth has overtaken cost reduction and containment as the third most important issue for L&D at 48% (+10%). As expected, cost reduction still continues to be ranked highly, and is now found in fourth place at 44% (-8%).

At the other end of the spectrum, issues such as falling market share, risk management and Health and Safety all continue to be ranked as very low priorities by Learning Managers. This is true across both large and small organisations.

Figure 20 below considers how the top business drivers for L&D have changed across the duration of surveys 2, 3 and 4.¹³ Improving organisational efficiency and execution has continued to be ranked as the most important issue for L&D across all the surveys. However, improving employee engagement and commitment has experienced a gradual increase across the entire survey period, while cost reduction and containment has seen a gradual overall decline, perhaps indicating that the worst may be over for L&D. Keeping employees engaged and motivated to perform against a backdrop of job insecurity and the pressure to achieve more with fewer resources has become a key priority for L&D practitioners.

Figure 20: Top business drivers overview



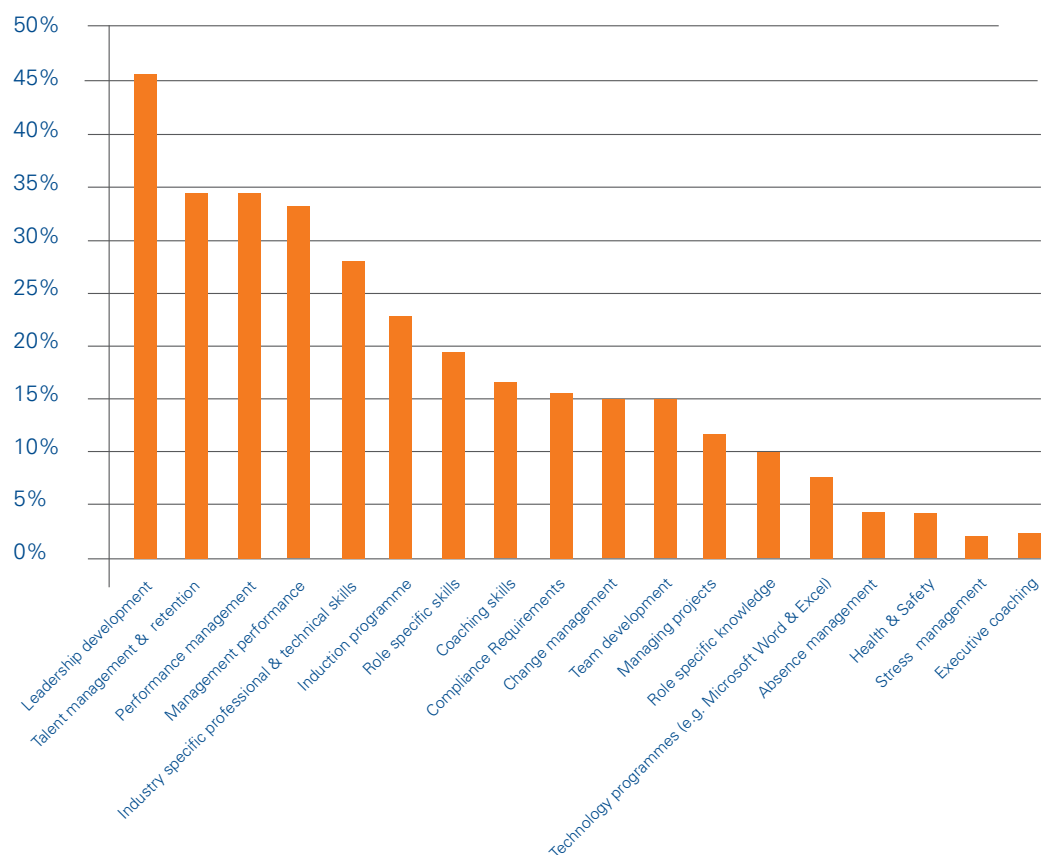
At the other end of the spectrum, less important areas include risk management, falling market share, Health and Safety and regaining investor trust and confidence. These areas have consistently been ranked as very low priorities in all surveys conducted to date.

¹³ This question was not asked in Survey 1.

4.4.2 What are the top three key issues your learning department will be focused on in the next six months?

When the results from the fourth survey are ranked on a relative scale as shown in Figure 21 below, it is clear that leadership development has maintained its position at the top of the L&D agenda at 45%. This represents a decrease of 12% on the previous survey figure. Although leadership development is still the most critical issue for L&D both now and in the coming months, the results of the latest survey show that greater attention is now being directed towards other areas within L&D's remit. These include wider talent management and retention activities, performance management and management performance. These three areas have all risen in importance since the previous survey, and are ranked approximately equal second in importance for L&D at around 34%.

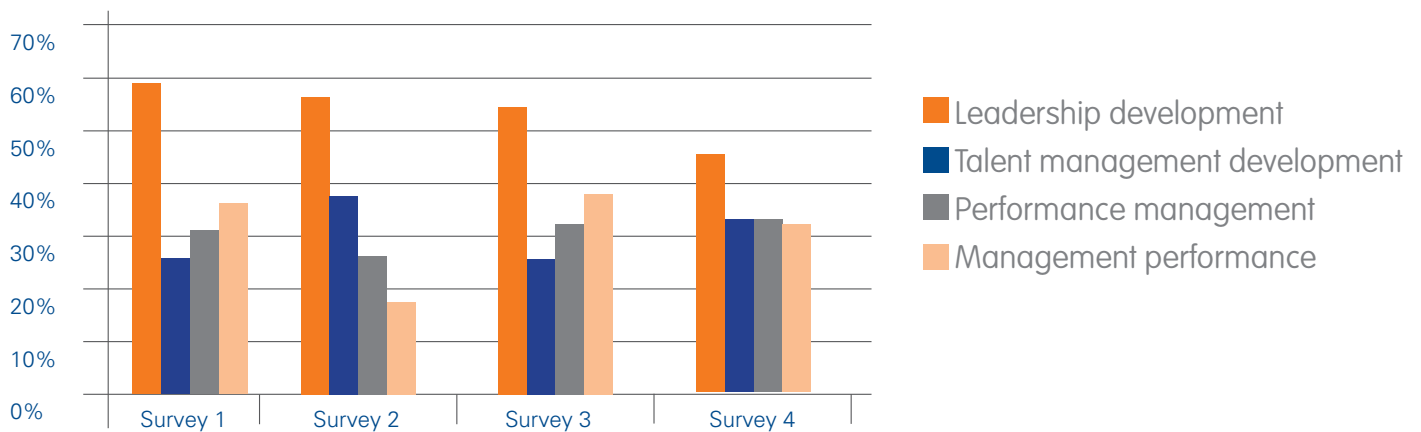
Figure 21: Key issues for L&D



As with the previous survey, areas including executive coaching, stress management, absence management and Health and Safety all continue to be ranked as low priorities for L&D within the current economic climate.

Figure 22 below tracks how L&D's top priorities have fluctuated across the period of all four surveys. It can be seen that the intense focus on leadership development activity that was apparent in previous surveys has waned somewhat. In the latest survey, this has led to a more even spread of attention on other key L&D priorities which may have been neglected at the expense of leadership development. Talent management and retention activities, performance management and management performance are now ranked equal second in terms of importance for L&D. The gap between these areas and leadership development has closed significantly since the previous survey in May 2011.

Figure 22: Key areas for L&D overview



5. End Notes

5.1 Next Steps

The survey will be repeated again in May 2012 and we will continue to track trends in responses. The results will continue to be published on www.goodpractice.com, www.reedlearning.co.uk and www.inlconsultancy.com.

If you would like to take part in future UK Learning Trends Index surveys please email sscott@goodpractice.com with your contact details. You may also be interested in joining our LinkedIn Group for L&D professionals. Please contact Stef Scott for more information.

5.2 About GoodPractice

GoodPractice develops and delivers high quality content designed to improve the performance of leaders and managers. Over a million users in more than 200 companies, public bodies and learning organisations are using GoodPractice to make the most of their skills and talents. Improving your leaders and managers isn't just good for business, it's essential. Our business is about helping you make that improvement. For more information on our solutions, visit www.goodpractice.com.

5.3 About Reed Learning

Reed Learning delivers short courses, professional qualifications, in-house programmes and outsourced training services. In the last 10 years we've trained over 250,000 people, including 20,000 new managers, 12,000 people who were scared of doing presentations, and 14,000 who needed to learn to prioritise. Our courses teach people to be more confident and capable, whether in presenting to a group, analysing a balance statement or deciphering a Google Analytics report.

People choose us for the widest choice for venues and dates, the largest pool of quality-assured trainers and guaranteed standards of training delivery. Our approach to learning extends beyond the classroom, with pre-and post-course skills audits, free refresher modules, action planning and e-learning at no extra cost.

Many of our courses have been accredited by leading professional and academic awarding bodies, including the Chartered Management Institute, the Institute of Sales & Marketing Management, the APM Group (PRINCE2®), IOSH and the Institute of Administrative Management.

5.4 About INL Consultancy

INL Consultancy service offers support to the total management of learning, to ensure intended change and improved performance. With over 40 experienced development experts worldwide, we work in partnership with clients to gain a thorough understanding of culture, climate and organisational intent. Working extensively with ASTD in the UK and other partner organisations, INL Consultancy will provide a range of accredited qualifications to suit you.

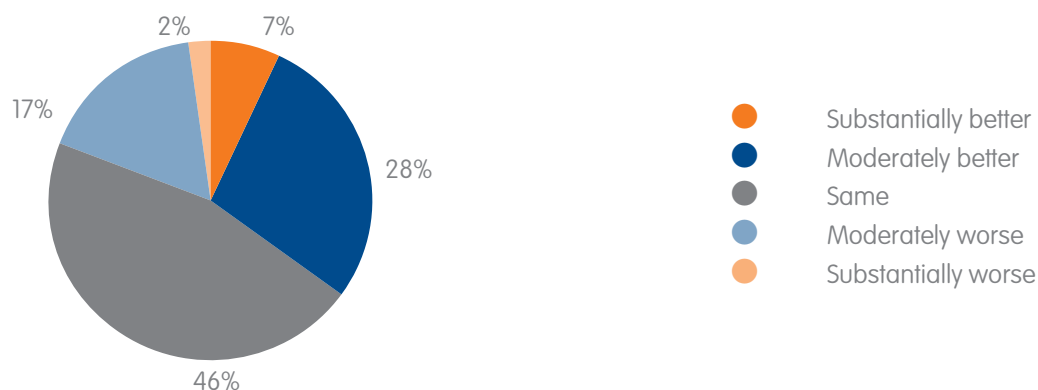


6. Appendices

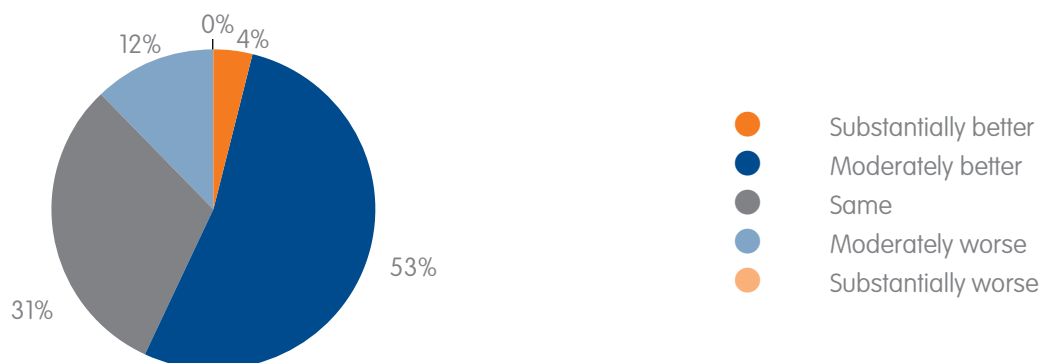
6.1 Appendix 1 – Survey Responses

Question 1: Please rate your expectations for the coming six months, from November 2011 to May 2012, in comparison to the previous six months for the following areas:

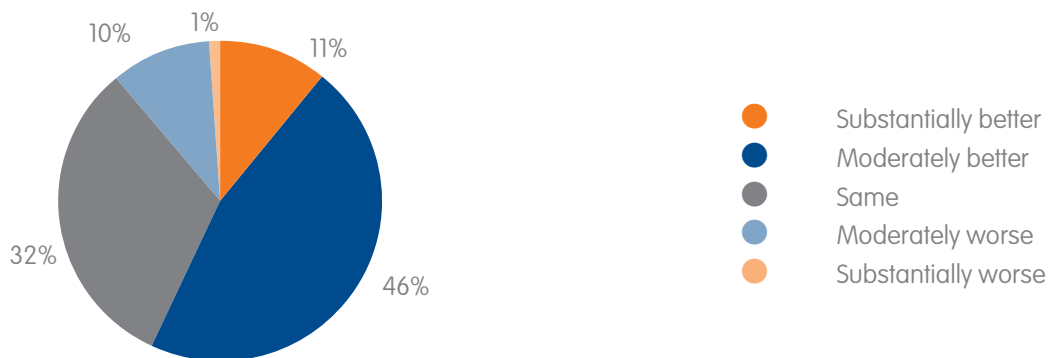
1. Your ability to meet learning needs



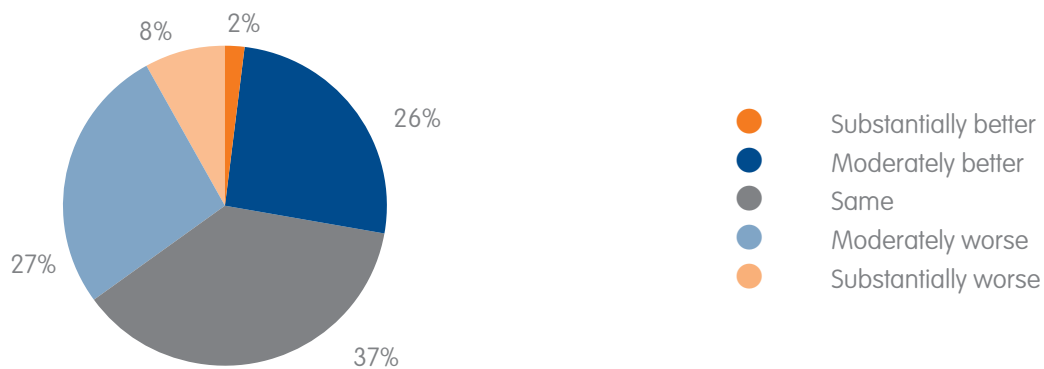
2. Your impact on corporate performance



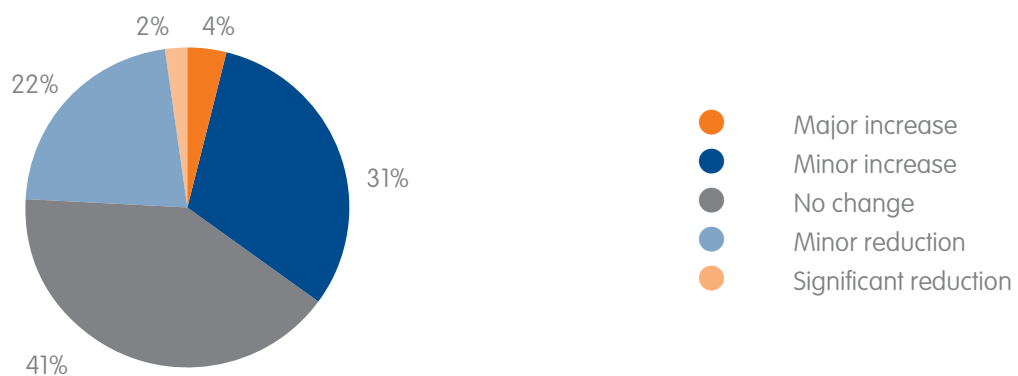
3. Your status as a key strategic contributor



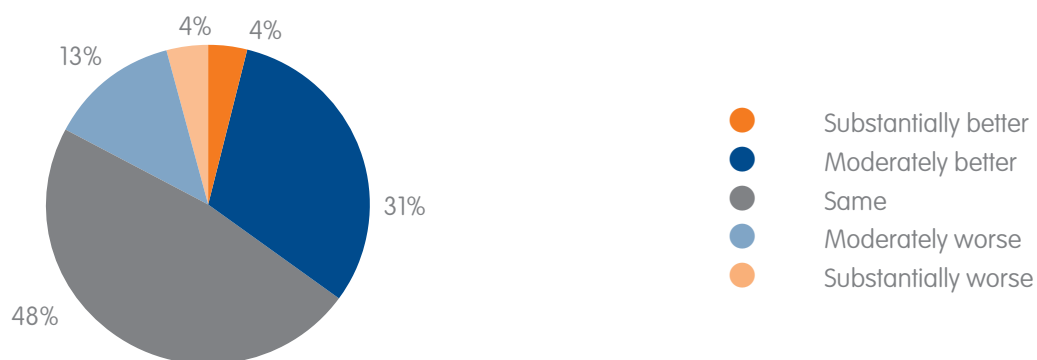
4. The availability of resources



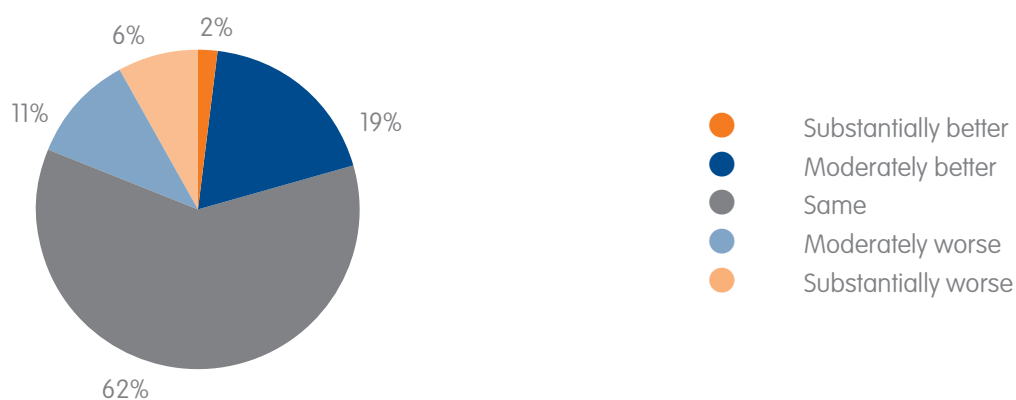
5. The status of the L&D profession



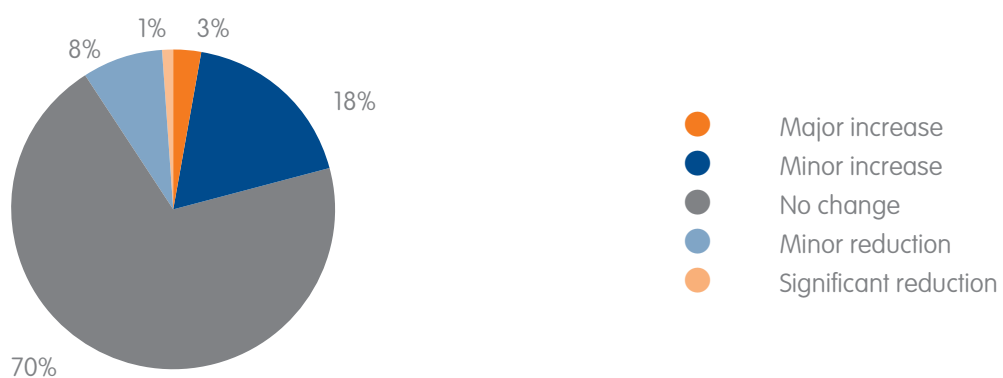
6. The ability to attract talent to your team



7. The extent of external provision and support

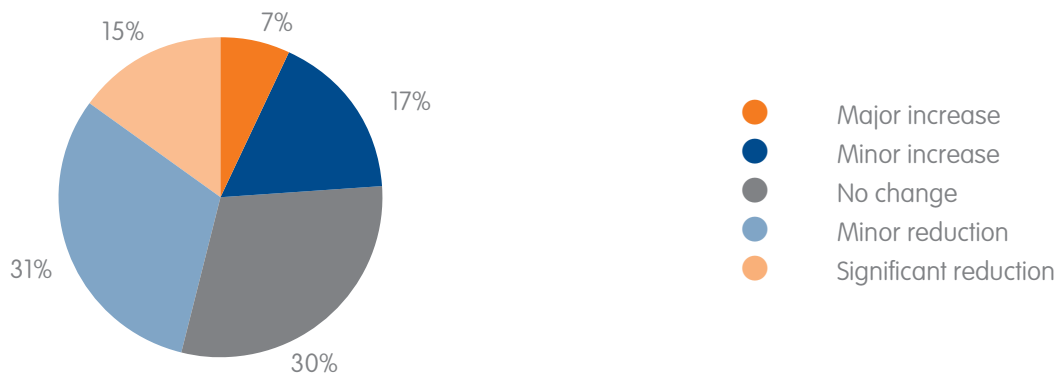


8. The quality of external provision

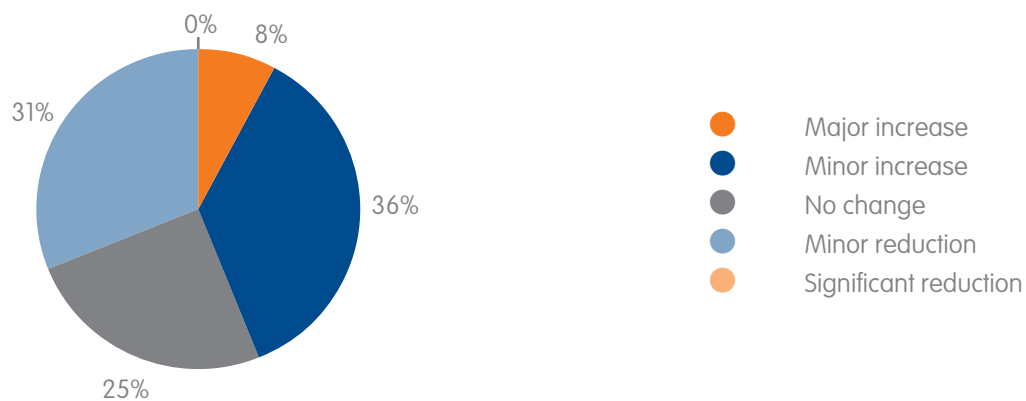


Question 2: For each of the following, please indicate what impact the economy will have on your learning function in the coming six months:

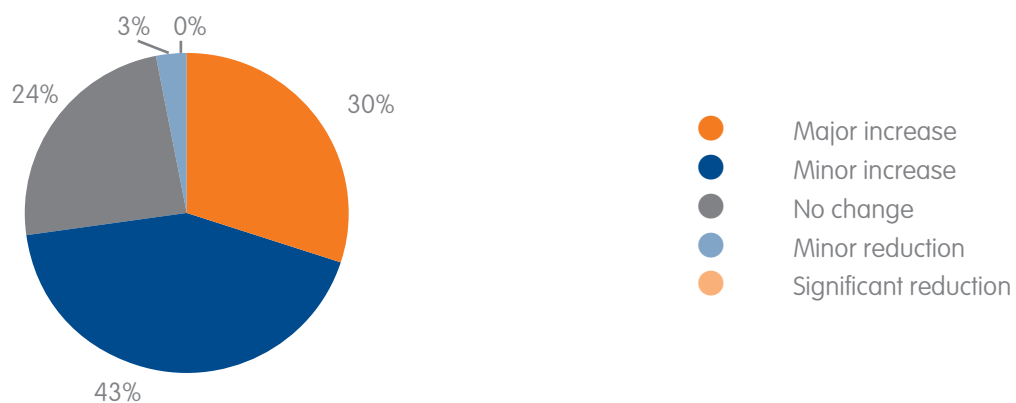
1. Emphasis for learning



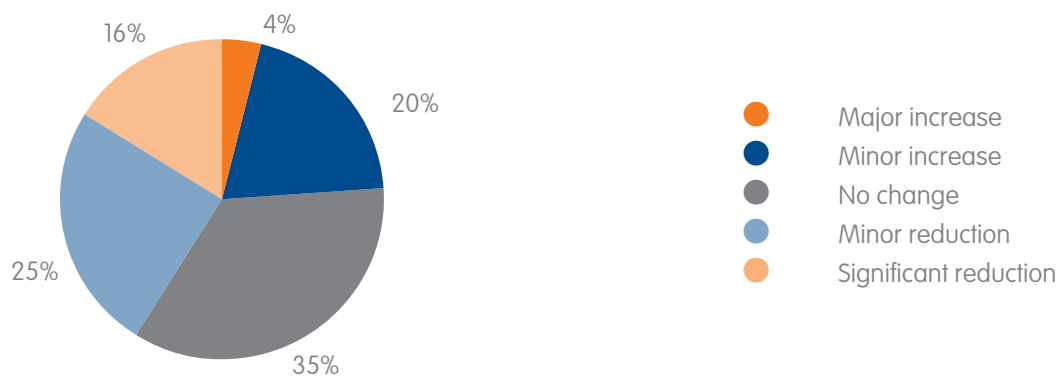
2. Travel for learners



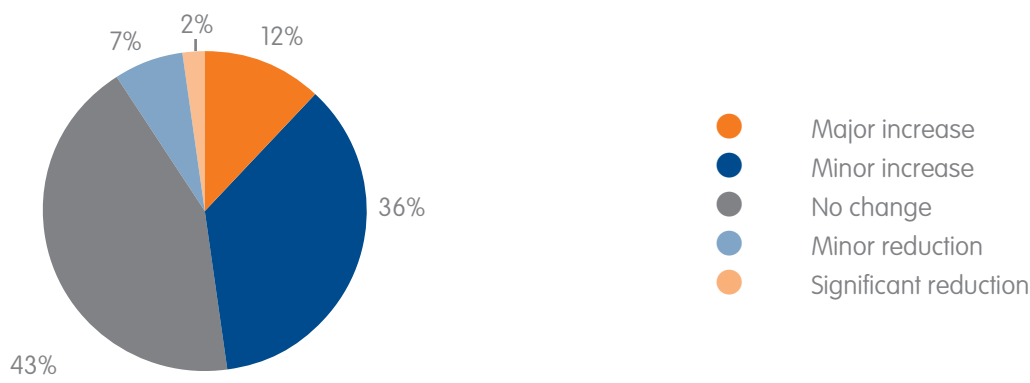
3. Shift to using technology (e.g. e-learning/virtual delivery)



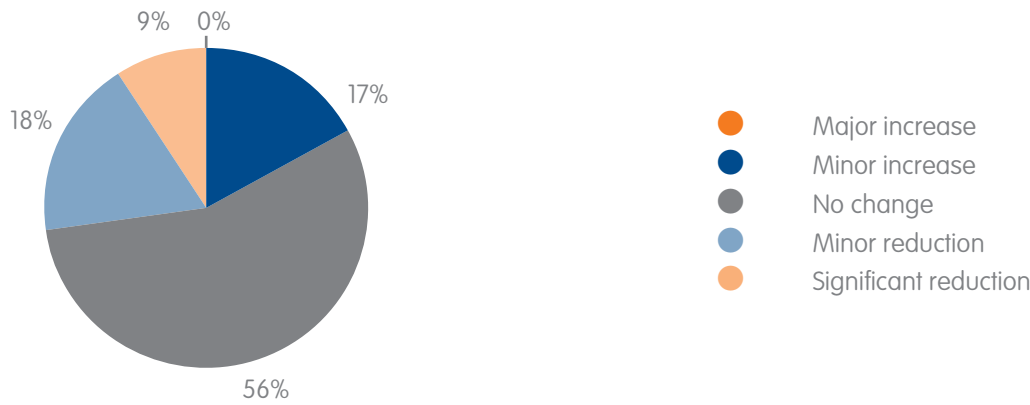
4. Travel for trainers and instructors



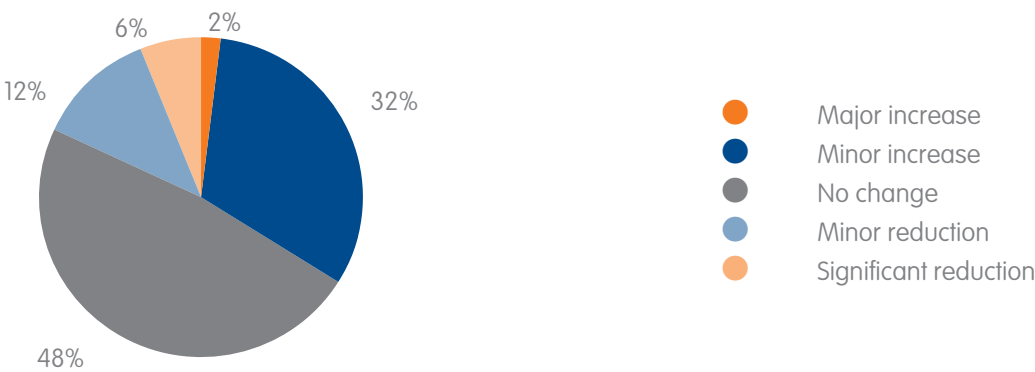
5. Re-use of existing content



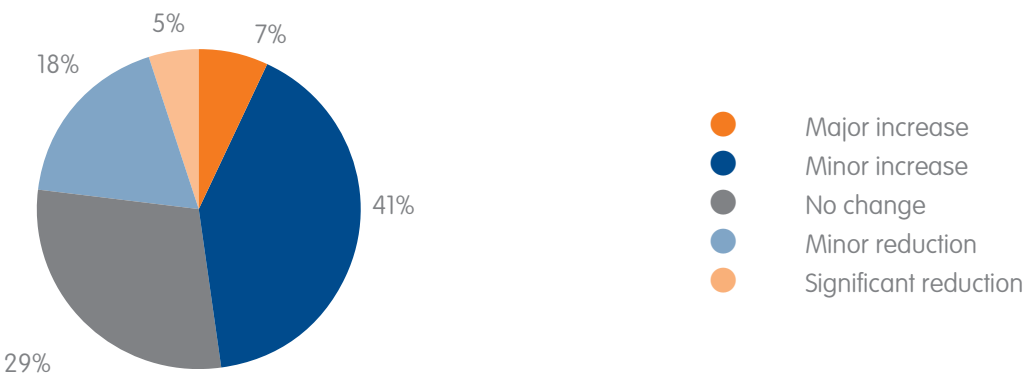
6. Staffing



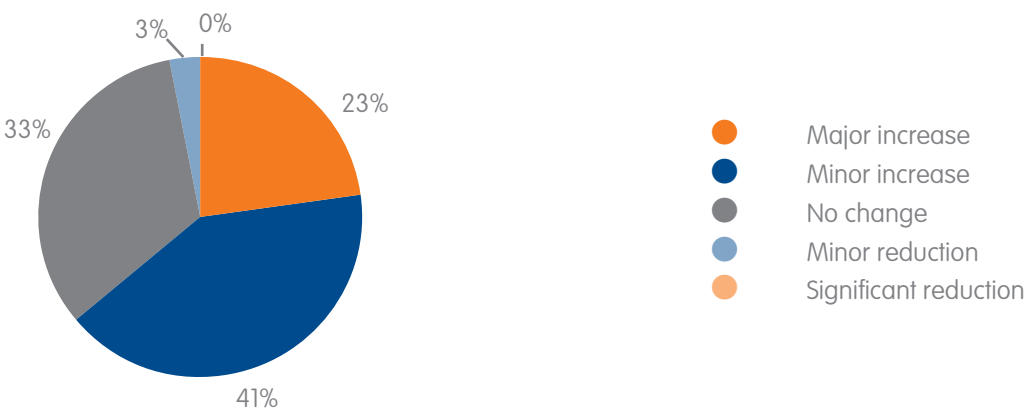
7. Organisation of the learning function and activity



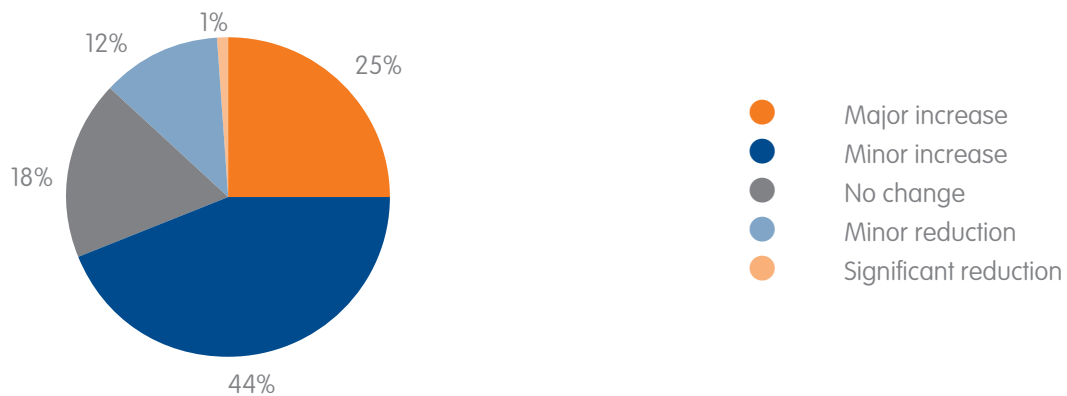
8. Learning services provided



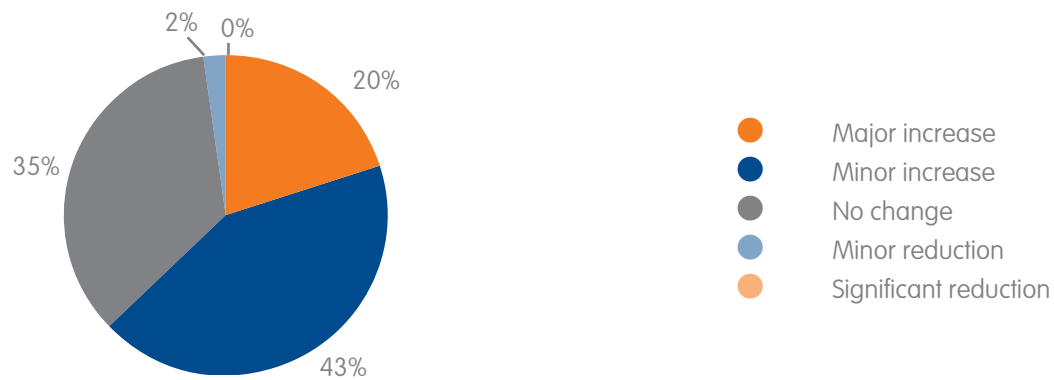
9. Reliance on informal learning



10. Creation of new learning content

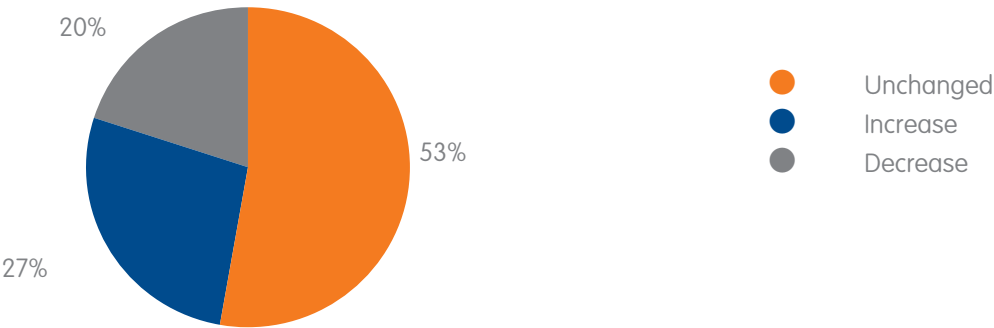


11. Use of social media

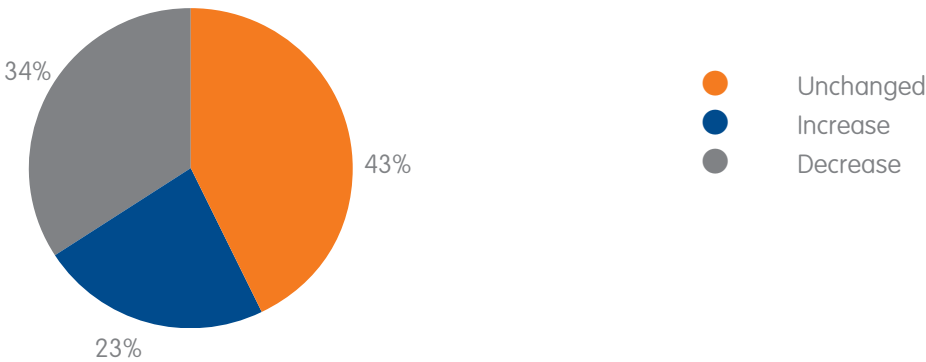


Question 3: Thinking about your budget spending in the next six months for the following activities, do you think it will increase, decrease or stay the same?

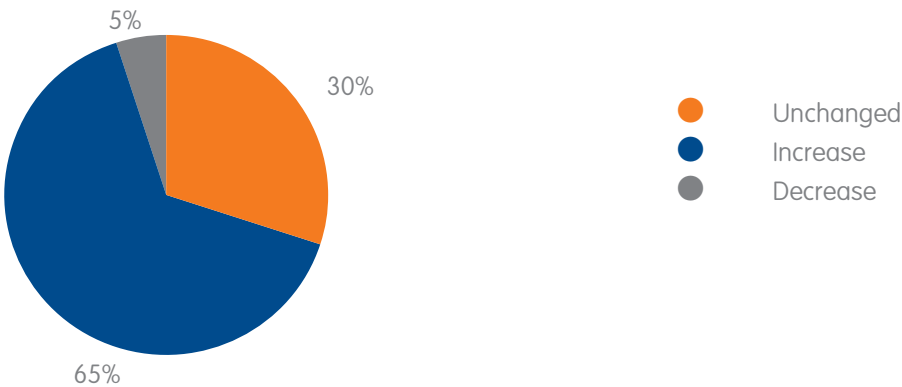
1. In-house trainers and/or instructors



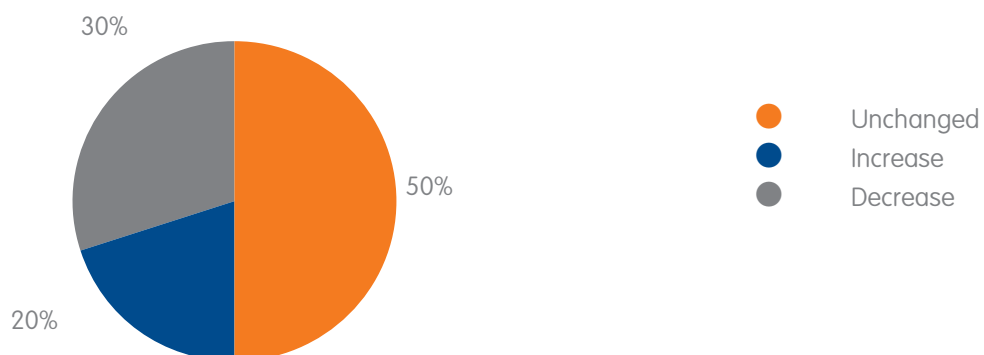
2. Outsourced delivery



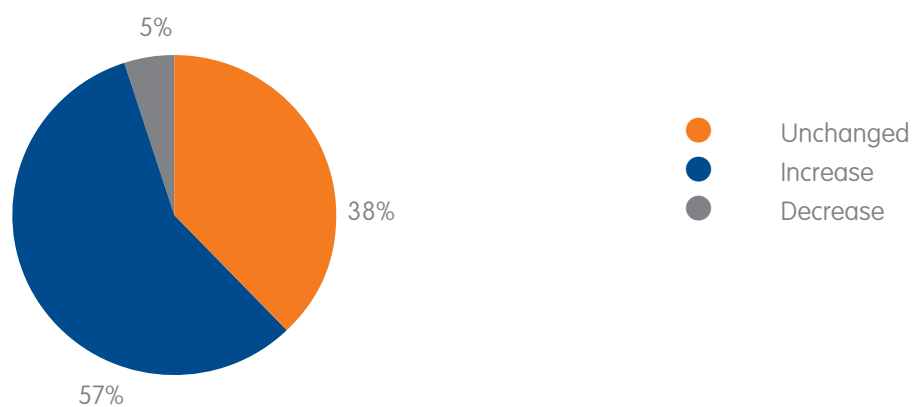
3. Technology-based learning (e.g. e-learning programme development)



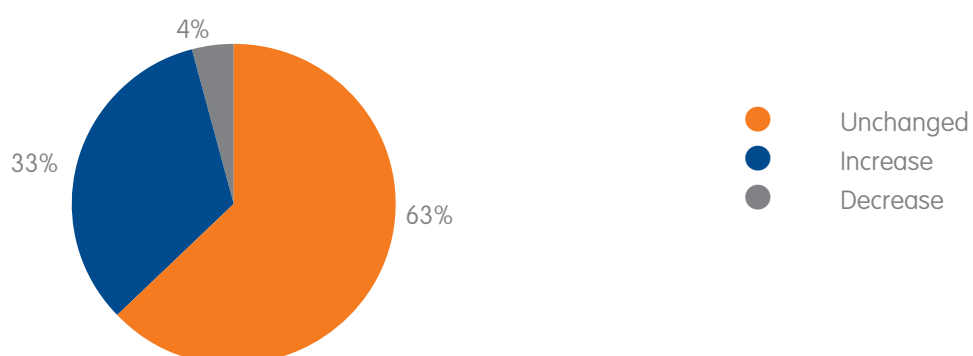
4. External coaching



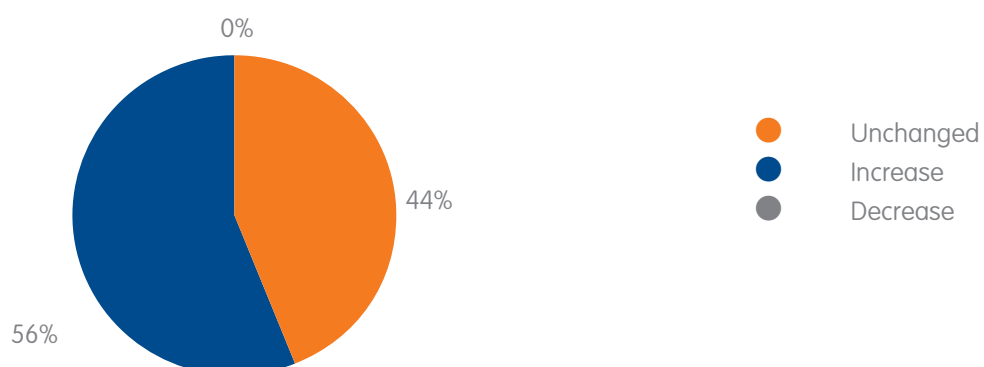
5. Informal learning support



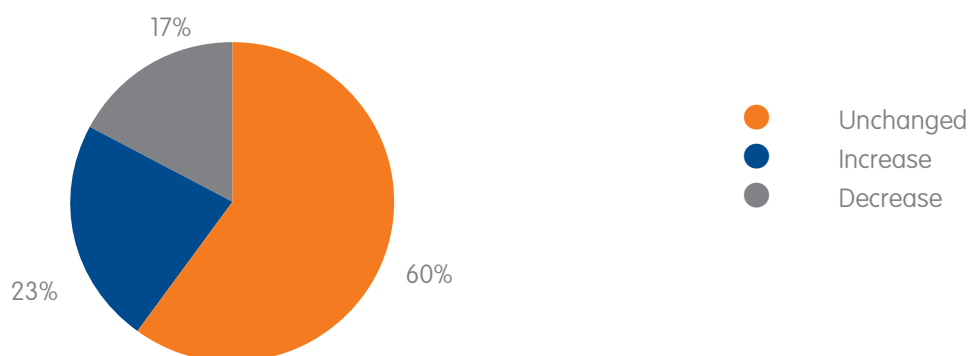
6. LMS system



7. Use of social media in your learning development solutions

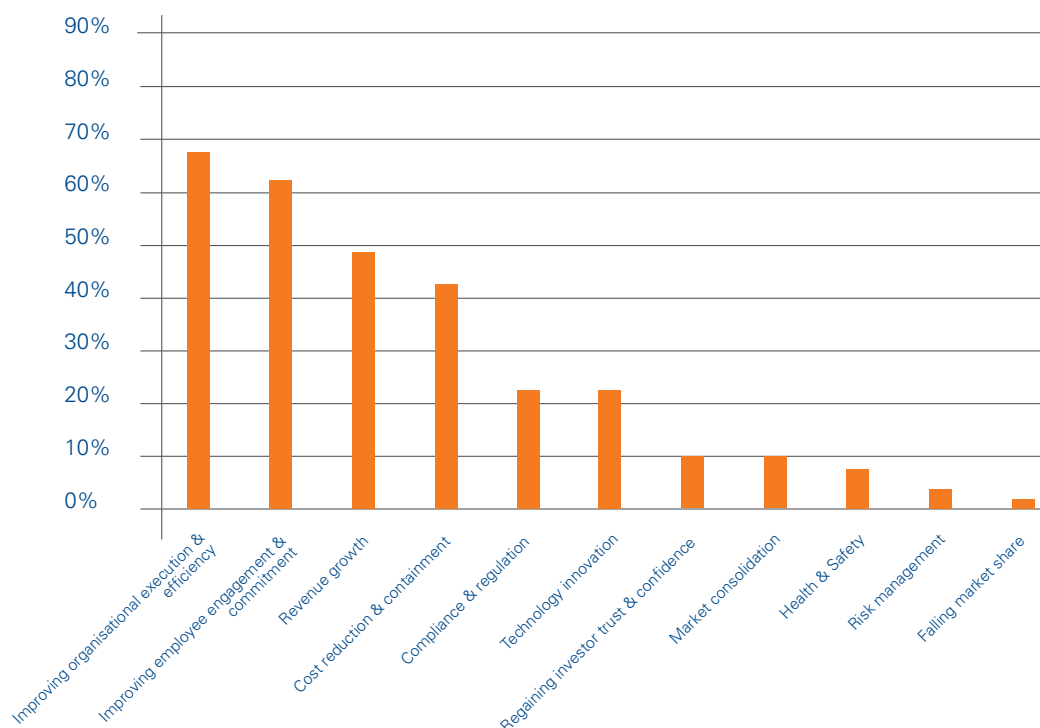


8. External support for the function development (e.g. strategy review)

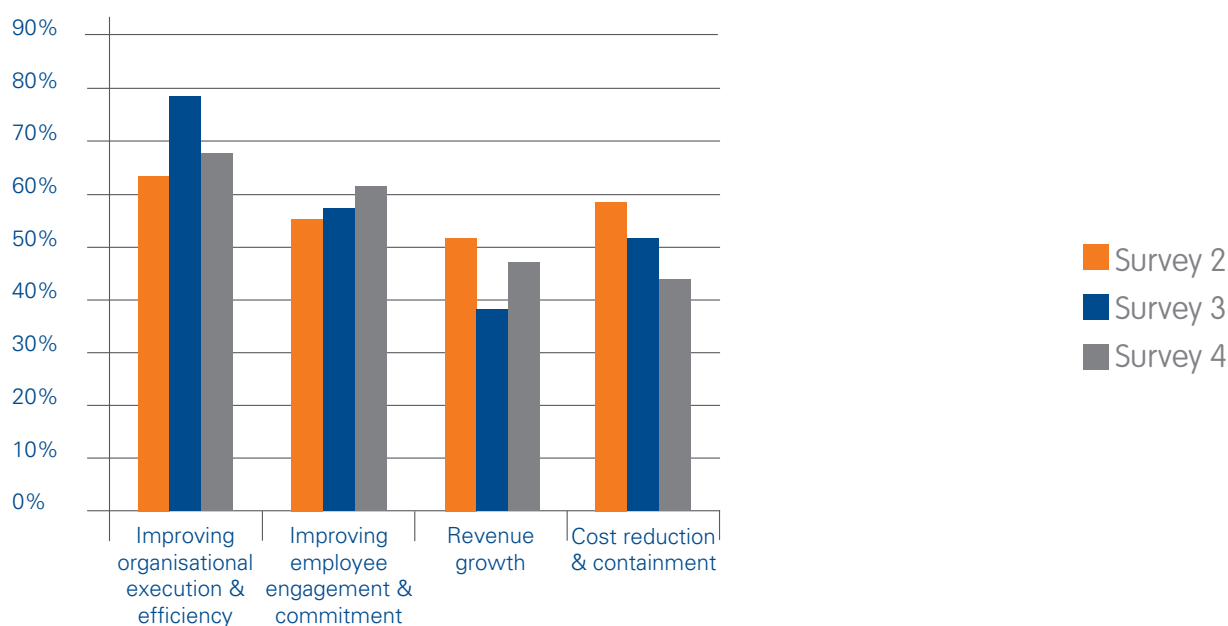


Question 4: Business drivers and key issues for L&D

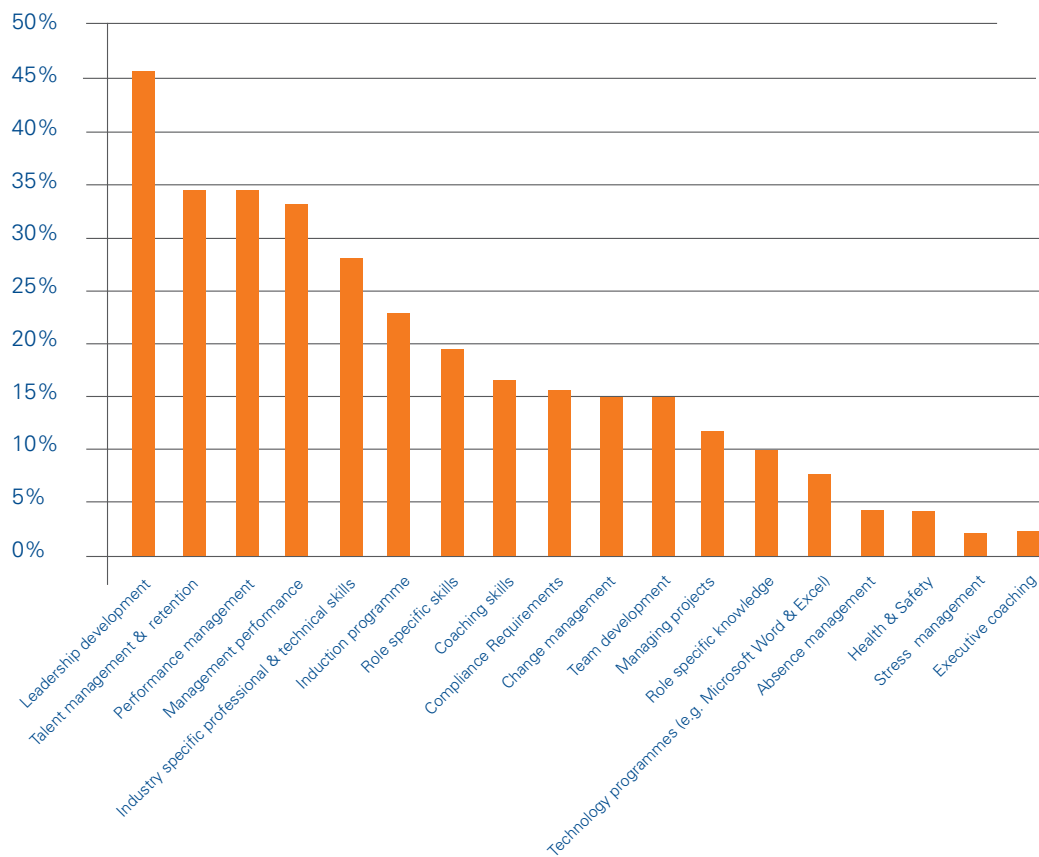
1. What are the top three business drivers which will impact on your L&D department in the next six months?



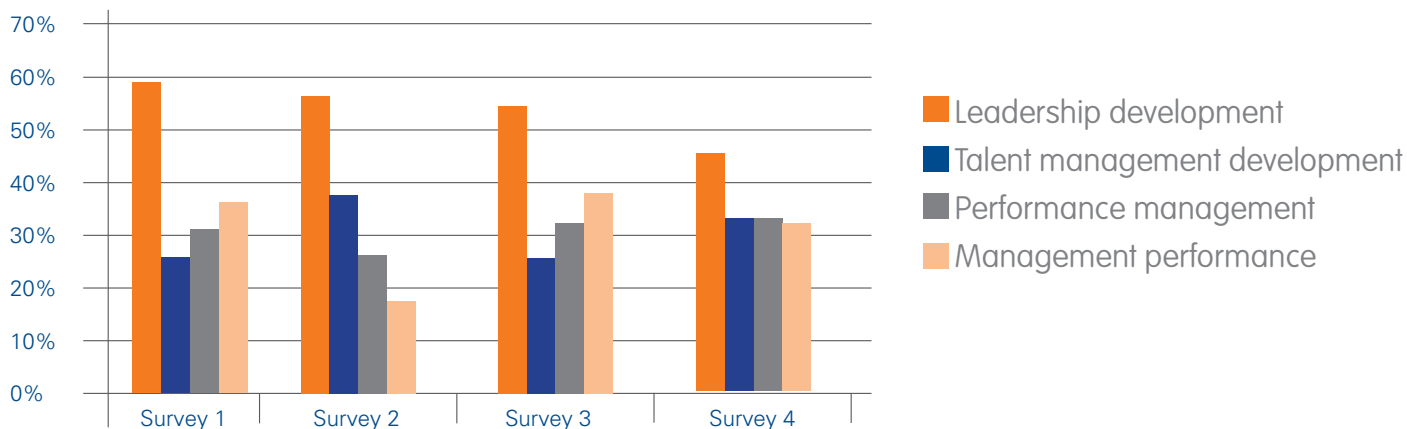
2. Comparison of top business drivers across surveys 2, 3 and 4



3. What are the top three key issues your learning department will be focused on in the next six months?



4. Comparison of L&D's top priorities across all four surveys





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