Two Keys to a Successful
**Learning Strategy**

Research Summary

SAP Litmos

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Brandon Hall Group Research Team
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## Demographics - 2018 Learning Strategy Study

**333** Global Responses

**33** Countries

- **69%** US/Canada
- **17%** EMEA
- **8%** APAC
- **6%** Carribean/South America

**36** Industries

Top 5: Technology/software, Consulting/Business Services, Healthcare, Education, Government

### Small, Mid-Size, and Large Organizations

**29%**
Less than 500 employees

**28%**
500-4,999 employees

**43%**
5,000+ employees

**33%** Learning/Leadership Development professional

**25%** Head of Learning/Leadership Development

**14%** Executive/Senior Leader

**9%** Head of HR/Talent Management

**6%** HR/Talent Management professional

**5%** Individual Contributor

**4%** Business Unit/Operations Manager

**4%** Technical/Production

# Key Statistics

**33%**

say their learning strategy is either effective or very effective in achieving business goals.
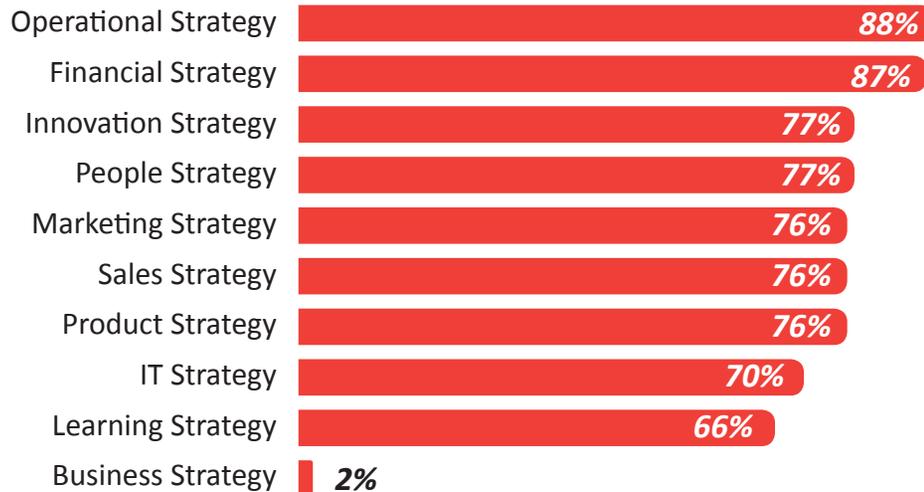
**59%**

that say it is somewhat effective.

Though aligning the learning strategy with the business is considered to be important or critical by **78%** of companies, only **18%** say they are ready to take action.

# Executive Summary

Organizations need to develop and deploy multiple strategies in concert with each other to achieve their goals. There's an overall business strategy, a marketing strategy, a sales strategy, a product strategy and others. But the learning strategy, which should be an integral part of this mix, does not seem to a top priority for most organizations and is in last place when assessing the importance of strategies to achieve business success.

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## Importance Of Strategies In Achieving Business Results

| | |
|---|---|
| Operational Strategy | 88% |
| Financial Strategy | 87% |
| Innovation Strategy | 77% |
| People Strategy | 77% |
| Marketing Strategy | 76% |
| Sales Strategy | 76% |
| Product Strategy | 76% |
| IT Strategy | 70% |
| Learning Strategy | 66% |
| Business Strategy | 2% |

Source 2018 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study (n=333)

The learning strategy may be seen as unimportant because organizations are not good at implementing it. Seventeen percent of those surveyed don't even have one in place and among the rest, they're not seen as being effective.

## Effectiveness of Learning & Development Strategy



Very Effective — 6%
Not at all Effective — 8%
Effective — 27%
Somewhat Effective — 59%

Source 2018 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study (n=333)
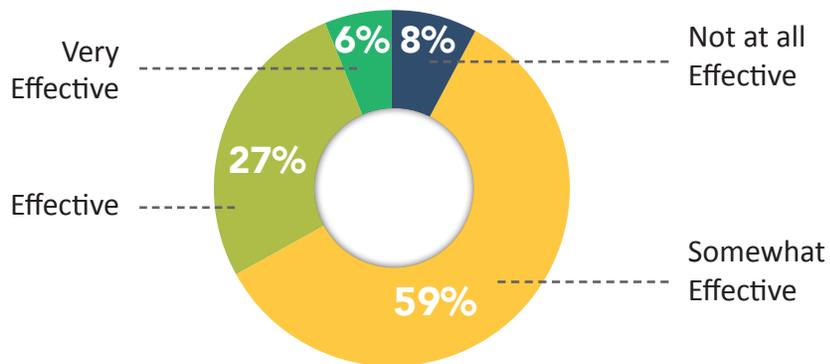
Less than one-third say their learning strategy is either effective or very effective in achieving business goals. And nearly 60% say it is somewhat effective, which does not inspire much confidence.

Companies struggle to create and deploy learning programs that meet employees' performance needs, making it difficult to impact business goals, which makes the learning strategy ineffective. Organizations must tackle this problem from both ends; developing learning strategies aligned with the business and creating learning experiences that impact performance.
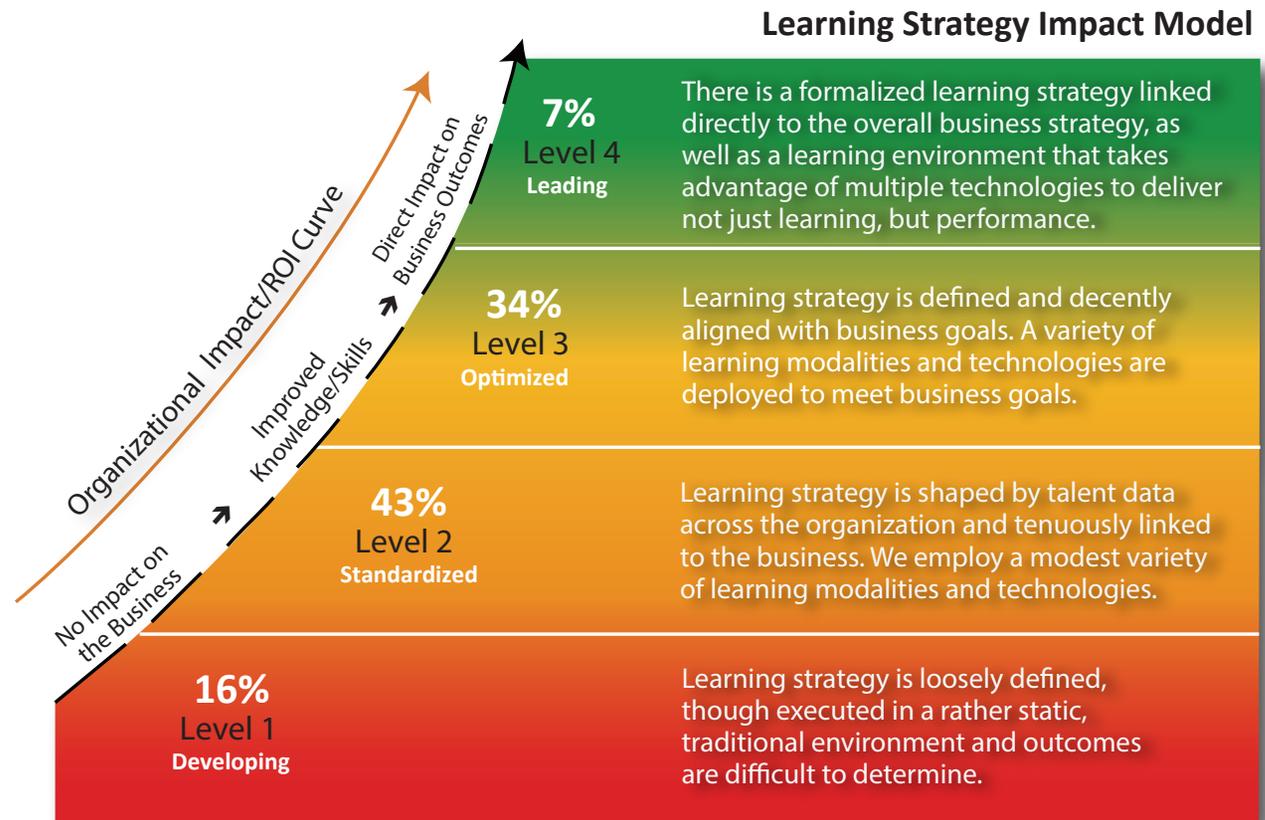
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# Two Keys to a Successful Learning Strategy

## Effectiveness Depends on Alignment with the Business

If learning strategies are not seen as effective or important to the goals of the business, that may be by design — poor design, that is. Fewer than half of the companies surveyed believe their learning strategy is even decently linked to the overall business strategy and just 7% say that it is very well aligned.
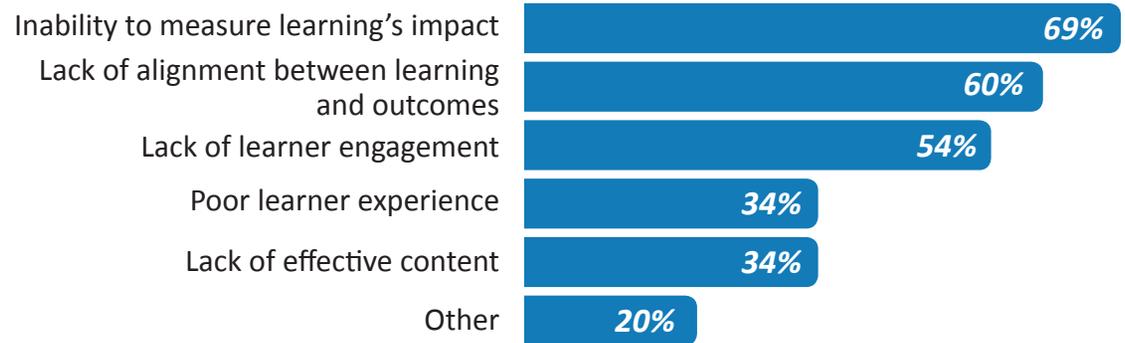
This model only includes organizations with a learning strategy, ignoring the 17% that do not. Sixteen percent of the strategies aren't really defined and are not linked to business outcomes. A very elite group (only about 7%) has a formalized learning strategy aligned with the business — and the analytics to back it up (Level 4). Within this group, 79% say their L&D strategy is either effective or very effective in helping to achieve business goals, which is a stark contrast to Level 1, where only 14% say their strategy is effective and zero say it is very effective.

### Learning Strategy Impact Model

**7%**
Level 4
**Leading**
There is a formalized learning strategy linked directly to the overall business strategy, as well as a learning environment that takes advantage of multiple technologies to deliver not just learning, but performance.

**34%**
Level 3
**Optimized**
Learning strategy is defined and decently aligned with business goals. A variety of learning modalities and technologies are deployed to meet business goals.

**43%**
Level 2
**Standardized**
Learning strategy is shaped by talent data across the organization and tenuously linked to the business. We employ a modest variety of learning modalities and technologies.

**16%**
Level 1
**Developing**
Learning strategy is loosely defined, though executed in a rather static, traditional environment and outcomes are difficult to determine.

Organizational Impact/ROI Curve

Direct Impact on Business Outcomes

Improved Knowledge/Skills

No Impact on the Business

Source 2018 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study (n=333)

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Without proper alignment, there is no way to ensure learning is effective. In fact, there is no way of knowing if it will be effective before it is delivered. The best a company can hope for is to deploy a great program and get lucky in producing results. This becomes evident when we look at the challenges companies face in achieving critical learning outcomes.

**Challenges to Achieving Critical Learning Outcomes**

| | |
|---|---|
| Inability to measure learning's impact | 69% |
| Lack of alignment between learning and outcomes | 60% |
| Lack of learner engagement | 54% |
| Poor learner experience | 34% |
| Lack of effective content | 34% |
| Other | 20% |

Source 2018 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study (n=333)

The top two challenges are the inability to measure the impact of learning and the lack of alignment so evident in many learning strategies. Not only are organizations unable to properly link learning to outcomes before the learning is even developed, they are also having difficulty demonstrating the link once it's been delivered. This data indicates that even the best learner experience with the best learning content, delivered to the most engaged learners will still not be able move the needle on outcomes without proper alignment.

Though aligning the learning strategy with the business is considered important or critical by 78% of companies, only 18% say they are ready to take action. What can be done to help create a more robust learning strategy with a connection to the business?

# A Blended Strategy Helps Tie It Together

Understandably, the robustness of the learning strategy extends through the actual delivery of learning, as high-performing learning functions deliver far more effective learning than lower-performing ones.

Organizations with robust, mature learning strategies do a far better job of delivering a well-rounded, blended learning experience than their lower-level counterparts.
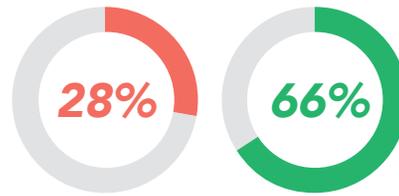
**Ability to Deliver a Blended Learning Experience**

**39%** Level 1    **75%** Level 4          **28%** Level 1    **66%** Level 4
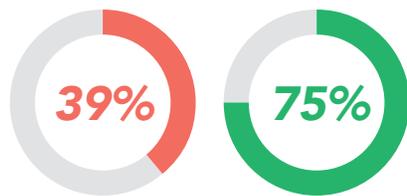
Our learning programs use a mix of formal, informal and experiential elements

We are able to deliver learning experiences tailored to the learners' needs and the subject at hand

Not only are Level 4 companies able to deliver a more blended learning experience, they are also focused on making learning more relevant and personalized for the learners.

Source 2018 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study (n=333)

Creating a blended learning environment with multiple opportunities for learners to engage in a wide array of formats and modalities is the critical piece to connecting the strategy to business outcomes. Brandon Hall Group's Learning and Performance Convergence Model outlines how to create alignment from desired business outcomes through learning measurement. The model should help companies create a fluid, blended approach to learning focused on specific outcomes aimed at changing how people work to improve the business.

# The Learning & Performance Convergence Model



Source: Brandon Hall Group 2018
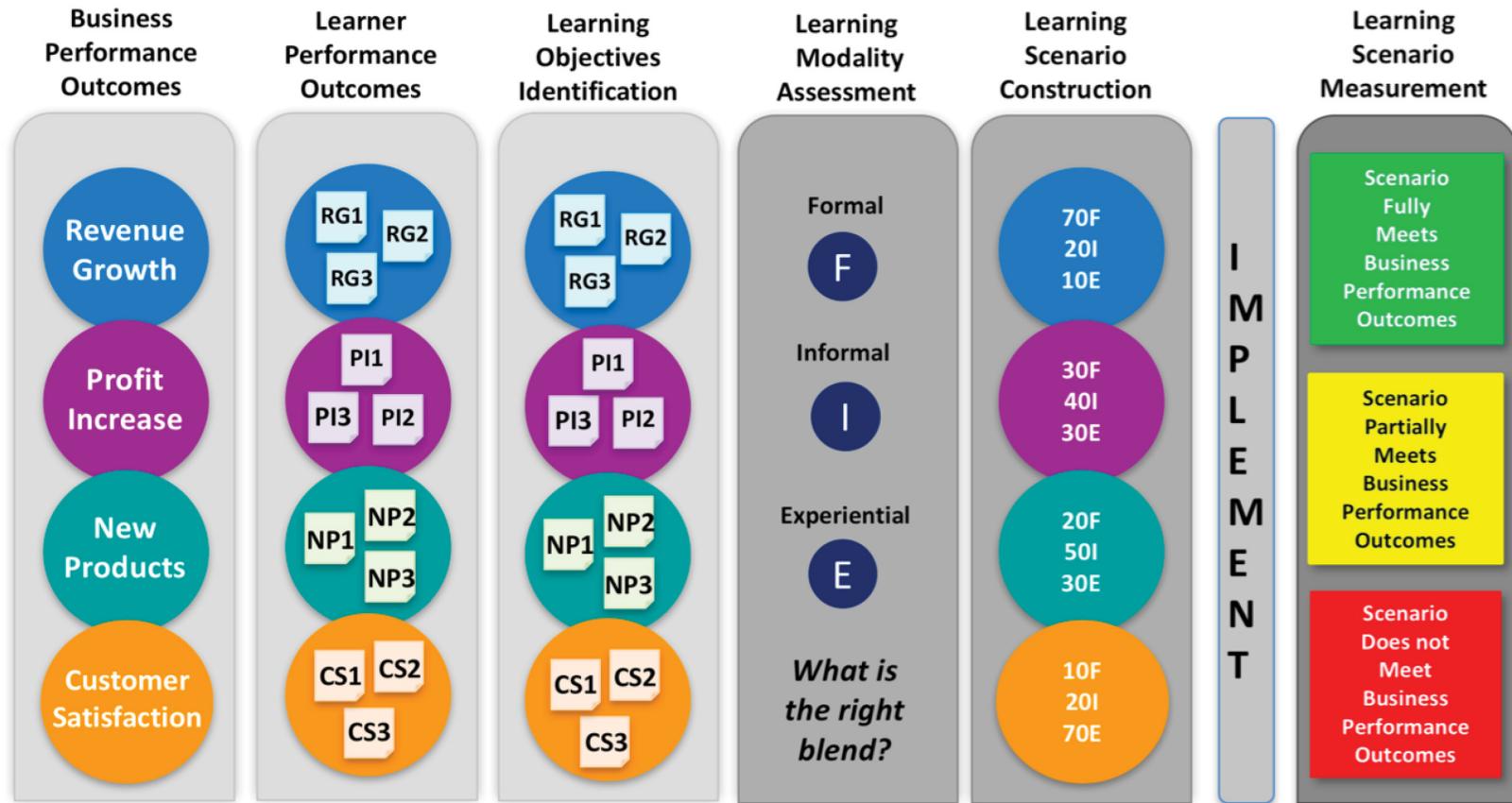
Accelerated Learner Development through Agile Learning Process

## Here is a synopsis of how the model works:

- The learning strategy must be informed by desired business outcomes.

- By identifying specific outcomes, companies can define the knowledge, skills and behaviors to help achieve those results.

- The knowledge, skills and behaviors become the objectives for the learning programs. This is the critical piece. Most organizations with ineffective strategies start with objectives before determining the critical desired outcomes, and the behaviors and skills that need to change.

- The mix of learning types will change from program to program, depending on the desired outcome. This is another stumbling block for many organizations; determining modalities before outcomes, changes needed to reach the outcomes and the learning objectives.

- A program can include elements of all three learning types, or maybe just two. It depends; some programs might require almost all formal learning, while others can focus more on experiential.

- The success or failure of the program can be measured by working back through the model and asking:
    » Were the learning objectives achieved?
    » Was a skill or knowledge acquired?
    » Has behavior changed?
    » Are business goals realized?

This type of measurement keeps learning tightly aligned with the business, as opposed to metrics like completion rates and smile sheets, which only measure the learning itself.

# Takeaways

- A learning strategy is critical. Without one, L&D is rudderless, with no vision or mission.
- The sole purpose of enterprise learning is developing people and helping the organization become successful. If learning is not informed by what makes the business succeed, it cannot succeed.
- Be agile. Do not set the strategy in stone. It needs to be fluid and dynamic to keep up with business needs.
- A robust learning strategy also includes the technology necessary to execute, the connections of learning to other parts of the business and the metrics required to demonstrate success.
- It can't just be a 30,000-foot vision of what learning should be. Include a roadmap with the technology required to make the vision a reality; create a model of learning's role in talent management in general, as well as within the organization at large; identify the outcomes the strategy is intended to deliver and the metrics that prove it is working.
- Measure learning's effectiveness by looking at business-related outcomes. If the strategy is strong, those outcomes will already be linked. Measurement confirms whether it is working or not.

# Brandon Hall Group Research Methodology

**PHASE 01**

**Evaluation of Business and Talent Landscape**

We study current trends to hypothesize about how they might influence future events and what effect those events is likely to have on your business. We then prepare a project outline and circulate to executives and practitioners in the particular field for feedback and insights before our research survey is developed.

**PHASE 02**

**Quantitative Surveys and Qualitative Interviews**

To test our hypothesis, we gather empirical insights through formal and informal surveys. To check assumptions generated from surveys and to add context to the empirical survey data, we talk to Executives, Chief Human Resources Officers, VPs of Talent and other business leaders as well as HR, Learning and Talent Leaders and employees.

**PHASE 03**

**Scholarly Reviews and Expert Resident Knowledge**

We study and analyze renowned academic research comparing and contrasting their findings to our own and again engage in rapid debate to ensure our findings and analysis stand the tests of business usability. New perspectives are shaped and added as appropriate. Our quantitative and qualitative findings are also shared within our internal research community and rapidly debated in peer review sessions to test validity and practicality.

**PHASE 04**

**Market Testing and Emergent Trends**

We fortify and validate our initial findings, leading practices and high impact processes within the analyst environment, our own Advisory Board and select other clients and prospects that offer fair assessment of the practicality and usability of our findings, practices, and processes. After studying and analyzing all collected data, we see and document patterns emerging within high-performing companies.

**PHASE 05**

**Analytics-Based Reports and Tools Publication**

After verifying our position internally, in alignment with scholarly research, and the market and completing rigorous peer reviews, our findings, leading practices and high impact processes are documented and published, made available to our members, in the form of reports, tools and online searchable databases.

## Client-Centered Business Goals

| Employer Brand | Business Performance | Client Loyalty | Market Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|

# About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management.

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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## GET HELP TO DRIVE RESULTS FOR YOUR TALENT

In today's volatile and global business climate, managing talent for high-performance plays an increasingly crucial role in an organization's growth and future success. Effective talent management is a top priority in organizations everywhere because, while organizations recognize the need to obtain and retain people with the very best skills, they continue to struggle to implement effective strategies to do so. HR and Learning professionals need to be able to successfully define organizational talents needs and skills, identify talent strengths and career goals, and align organizational needs to individual needs. Rethink your strategy, validate your assumptions, transform your business, and optimize your time with the use of reliable data, tools, and guidance.

PLAN    ATTRACT    DEVELOP    PERFORM    RETAIN    OPTIMIZE

## GET HELP WITH YOUR HR SERVICES MANAGEMENT & DELIVERY

As described in the employee lifecycle, processes are linked to employee transactional processes (e.g., compensation, benefits, compliance, contingent workforce management, etc.) via workforce planning and analytics.

- Policies/Process/Procedure
- Payroll
- Expense Management
- Benefits & Compensation

- Contingent Workforce Management
- Compliance
- Time & Labor Management

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# Our Services (Continued)

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- Team Development

- Measurement & Analytics
- Program Design & Deployment
- Technology Selection, Management & Integration

- Organizational Structure
- Measurement & Analytics
- Change Management
- Budgeting & Forecasting

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