Brandon Hall GROUP

SAP Litmos

Brandon Hall GROUP
Smartchoice®
Preferred Solution Provider
PLATINUM
2021

How Well Do You Know Your Learners?

2021

It Could be Less than You Think.

Table of Contents

Current State

Before the pandemic, developing and delivering learning to a highly dynamic and mobile workforce was already a daunting task. Now, organizations spend significant time and resources trying to understand the best ways to help their employees continue to learn, upskill and reskill for the future.

Personalizing learning is the key to helping employees during this tumultuous time. If learning can be highly contextualized and delivered in the flow of work, employees have the best chance to take advantage of the learning and put it to use.
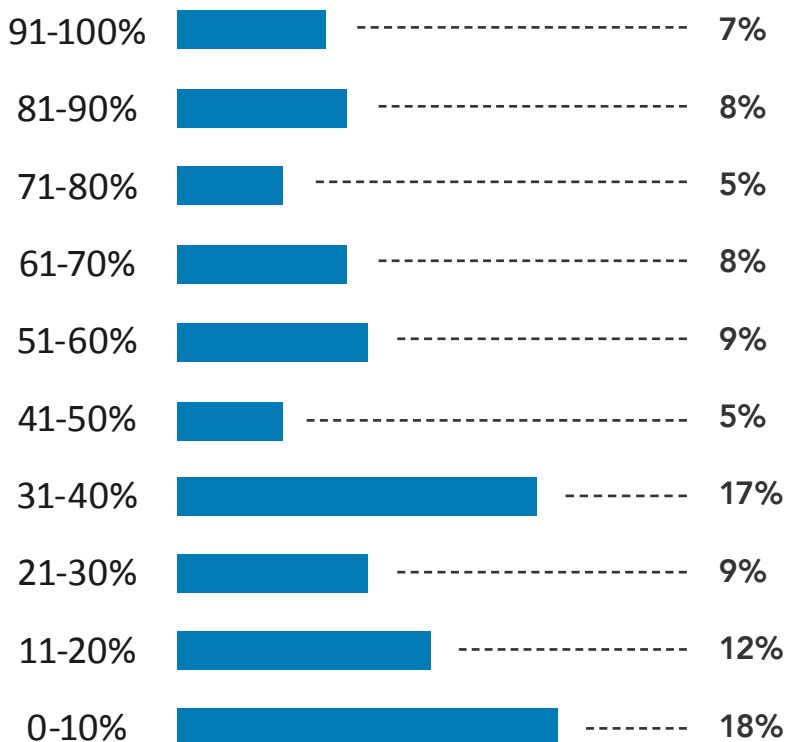
To do this properly, learning professionals must leverage data and insights to better understand their learners. Only then can they work on a strategy to develop and deliver a personalized learning experience for every employee. The dynamics of the workforce and how employees interact with the company, technology and each other have changed dramatically. For instance, a joint study between Brandon Hall Group and SAP Litmos found that for 85% of companies, at least some of the learning audience is remote. Additionally, 82% of companies say at least some of their learners are mobile, meaning they do not learn in one place, but learn on the move, outside the home or traditional office.

What percentage of your learners are remote workers?
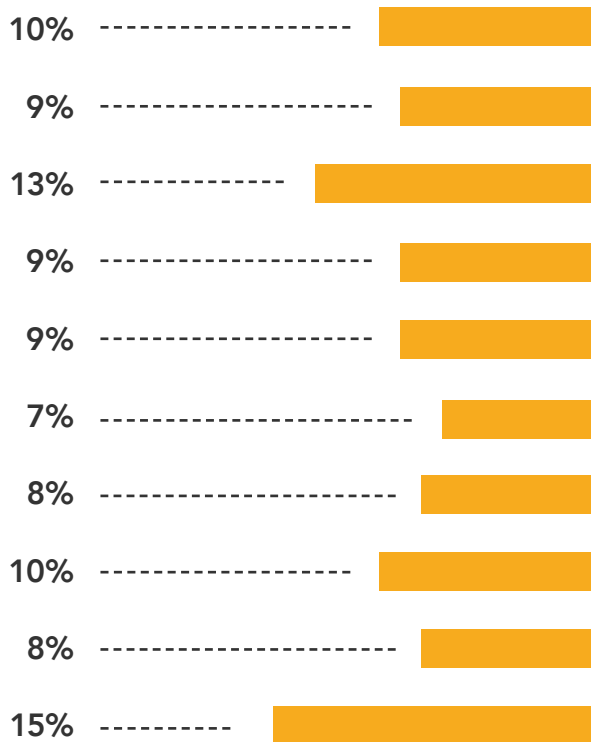
What percentage of your learners would you consider mobile (do not learn in one place, learn on the move, learn outside the home or traditional office)?

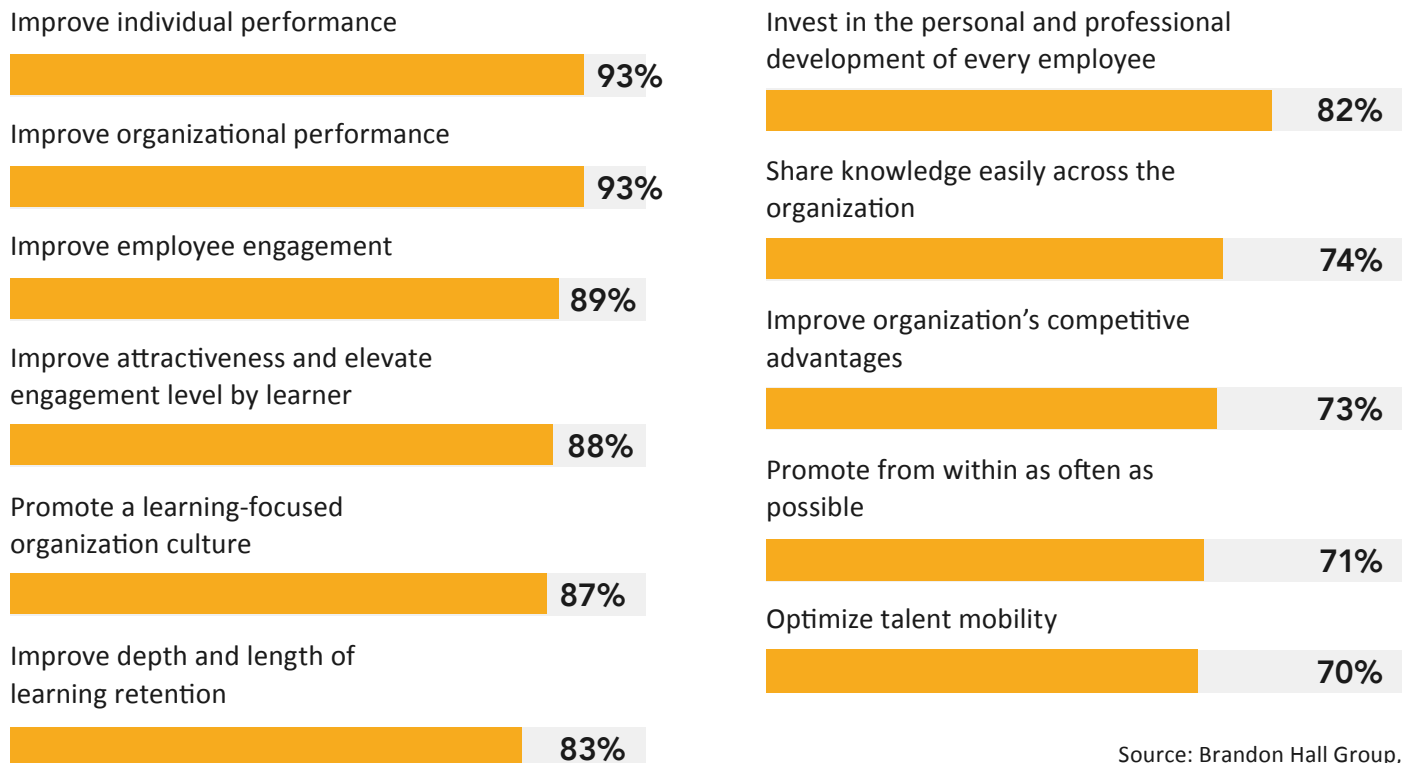| Remote	Range	Mobile
10%	91-100%	7%
9%	81-90%	8%
13%	71-80%	5%
9%	61-70%	8%
9%	51-60%	9%
7%	41-50%	5%
8%	31-40%	17%
10%	21-30%	9%
8%	11-20%	12%
15%	0-10%	18%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Understanding the Learner Study

Why Personalization?

This puts more pressure on L&D teams to create personalized learning that fits into the new flow of work. According to Brandon Hall Group's *Upskilling and Reskilling Study*, 93% of companies say that personalized learning is either very important or critical to driving both individual and organizational performance. But developing and delivering personalized learning requires organizations to have an expert understanding of learners and their environment. By identifying the characteristics of every learner as well as how, when and where they learn, Learning can become much more targeted, focused and impactful.

Personalized Learning's Importance to Outcomes

Improve individual performance
93%

Improve organizational performance
93%

Improve employee engagement
89%

Improve attractiveness and elevate engagement level by learner
88%

Promote a learning-focused organization culture
87%

Improve depth and length of learning retention
83%

Invest in the personal and professional development of every employee
82%

Share knowledge easily across the organization
74%

Improve organization's competitive advantages
73%

Promote from within as often as possible
71%

Optimize talent mobility
70%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Upskilling and Reskilling Study

When learning is not personalized or contextualized to some degree, learners will seek content outside the purview of the L&D function because they think it is easier to find and more useful. Let's face it, if the information someone needs is not readily available, they will search the internet to find it, leading many learners to incorrect, outdated, or inappropriate content.

To what extent do you think learners are accessing content that is not curated or created by your organization because they find it easier to access and/or more useful?
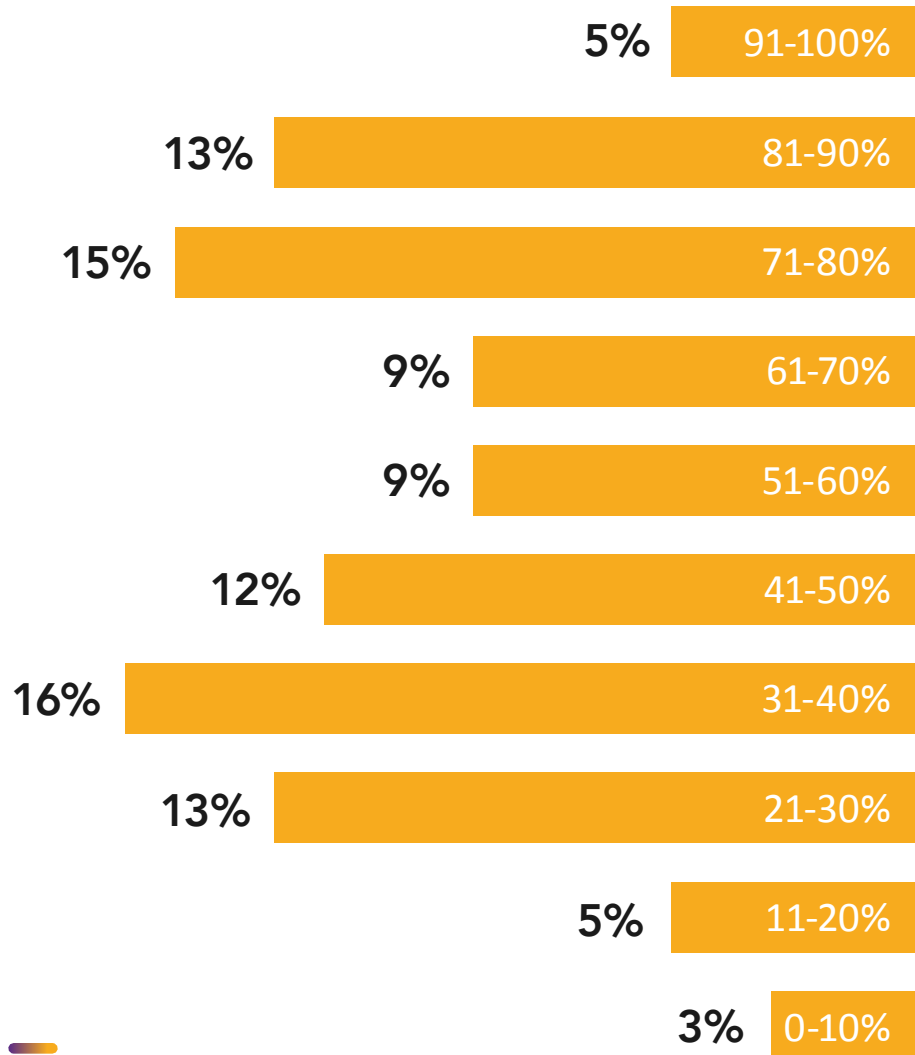
Source: Brandon Hall Group, Understanding the Learner Study

All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
3%	19%	71%	7%

What Do We Need To Know?

For many companies, having a person's name, title and picture in their profile is as personalized as the employee experience gets. To make learning more engaging and impactful, however, it is important to know much more. Personalized Learning is the process of providing learning experiences based on the employee's professional and personal needs and interests, as well as ensuring they can access that learning in a venue and time frame that best suits them.

For instance, before launching a learning program that relies heavily on new technologies or software, it makes sense to understand just how technologically savvy the learners are. Making assumptions on the digital prowess of the audience will sink any hopes of achieving outcomes.

What percentage of your learners would you consider to be "tech savvy" (very comfortable with mobile devices, software, apps, digital communication, transacting online, etc.)?

Percentage	Range
5%	91-100%
13%	81-90%
15%	71-80%
9%	61-70%
9%	51-60%
12%	41-50%
16%	31-40%
13%	21-30%
5%	11-20%
3%	0-10%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Understanding the Learner Study

Few companies have a complete grasp of who their learners are. Fewer than half say they are either familiar or very familiar with when their learners learn; and about the same number say they are familiar or very familiar with learners' personal and professional growth objectives. This means that more than half of companies are essentially throwing learning programs against the wall, hoping something will stick. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to personalize the learning at any scale. The lack of connection between the learners and the learning leads to poor engagement, less knowledge retention and ultimately, an inability to achieve business objectives.

How familiar are you with when a learner learns (during normal work hours/ afterhours, workdays/non-workdays, etc.) and its impact on learning?

How well do you know the personal and professional growth objectives of your learners?

|		
12%	Not familiar	12%
45%	Somewhat familiar	45%
25%	Familiar	30%
18%	Very familiar	13%
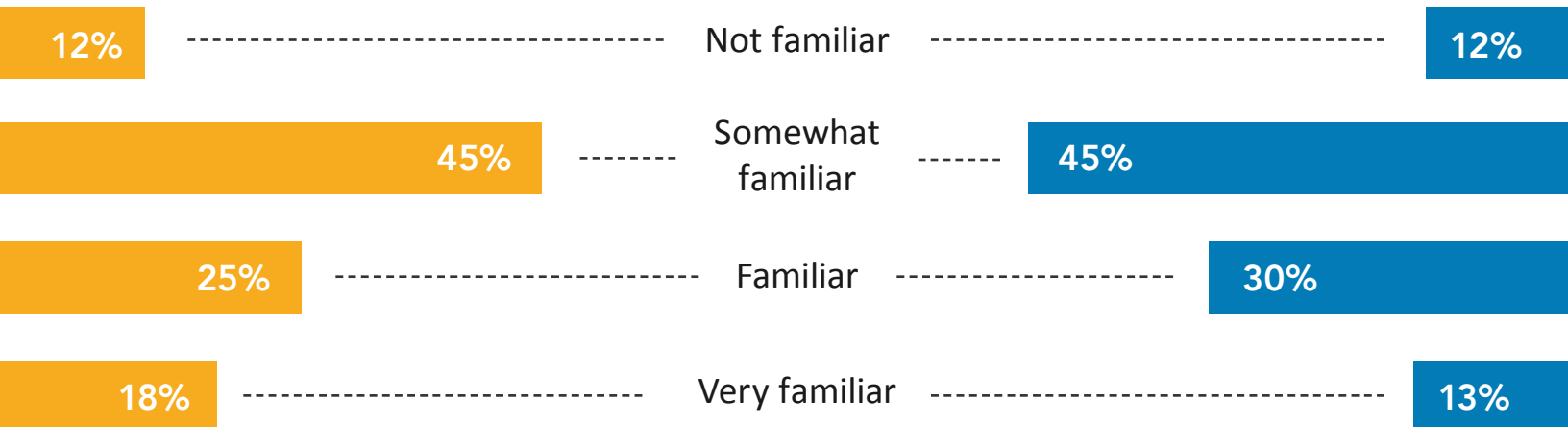
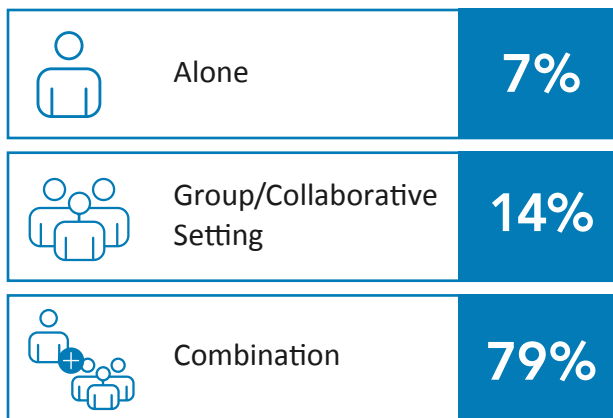Source: Brandon Hall Group, Understanding the Learner Study

It is also critical to understand what kind of learning environments learners prefer to engage with. Is it eLearning, in-person classes or a combination? Also, do they prefer to learn on their own or collaboratively in groups? Most organizations recognize that their learners need a blend of these kinds of experiences to truly meet their needs.

Do you know if your learners prefer eLearning, in-person classes/coaching or some combination of both?

	eLearning	**7%**
	In-person classes and coaching	**11%**
	Combination	**82%**
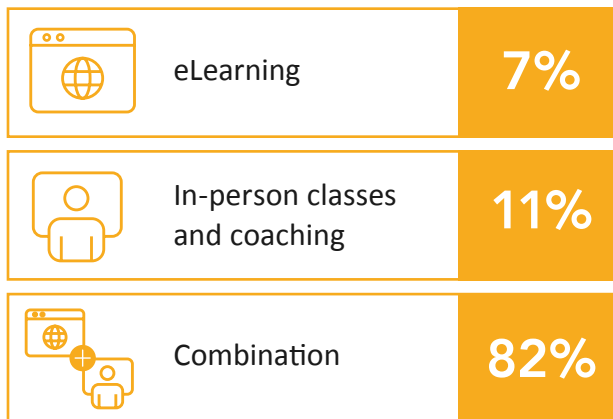
Do you know if your learners prefer learning alone, in a group/collaborative setting or a combination of both?

	Alone	**7%**
	Group/Collaborative Setting	**14%**
	Combination	**79%**

Source: Brandon Hall Group,
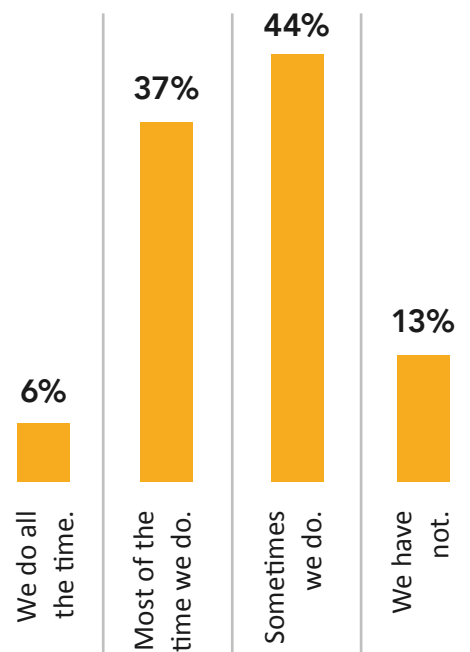Understanding the Learner Study

Challenges

Companies struggle with understanding their learners often for the most basic reason: They simply do not ask. Fewer than half of companies in Brandon Hall Group's *Learning Strategy Study* say they do a good job of including learner input and feedback in the development of their learning strategy. Even fewer regularly engage learners in helping develop the learning content.

How often have you engaged learners in helping with the development of content that they want to consume?

We do all the time.	Most of the time we do.	Sometimes we do.	We have not.
6%	37%	44%	13%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Understanding the Learner Study

Even if companies know enough about their learners, it can still be challenging to deliver personalization at scale. Many organizations have a huge blind spot when it comes to the managers' role in learning. Their managers aren't properly coaching their teams and have no idea what it is they experience from a learning perspective. When properly included, managers can provide incredible insight into how, when and what their employees should be learning. Other top challenges pertain to not having the right technology to deliver a truly personalized learning experience properly and the lack of the right skill set within the L&D team.

Top Challenges to Personalization at Scale

85% We have managers who are not very good coaches and don't know what their employees are learning.

70% We don't have a good handle on what our learners need or drives them.

77% We do not have the technology ecosystem in place to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.

68% The organization believes a one-size-fits-all approach to learning is sufficient.

77% Our learning organization is not trained properly to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.

68% We believe it would be too difficult to administer and maintain.

74% We believe it would be too expensive.

68% We don't have a good handle on how to effectively and efficiently reach our learners.

70% We do not promote peer-to-peer, collaborative learning.

66% We follow traditional learning development processes such as ADDIE and are not familiar/comfortable with new agile development processes.

Moderately to extremely challenging
Source: Brandon Hall Group, Upskilling and Reskilling Study

Strategies for Success

Personalized learning at scale simply cannot be delivered with outdated and outmoded tools, technologies and processes. To create learning experiences that truly drive behavior, performance and business impact, organizations will have to rethink their approaches.

Actions being taken to improve personalization

85% Adopting new learning processes

72% Elevating the awareness of need/importance of personalized learning in the organization

67% Technology evaluations/selections

35% Retraining learning organization

12% Hiring new learning professionals

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Upskilling and Reskilling Study

Our research identified several key elements that go into effective personalized learning and many of them revolve around gaining a better understanding of learners, their needs and how it links together. The second-most important element, right behind a well-developed learning strategy, is aligning learning with the personal and professional goals of learners.

Importance of Personalized Learning Elements

A well-developed learning strategy
90%

Learning needs to highly align with the personal and professional goals of the learner at every employee level.
88%

Learning needs to highly align with the objectives of the business at every employee level.
84%

Learners require frequent feedback by coaches/mentors and managers.
74%

Learning can be rated by learners.
74%

Learners need to be recognized and rewarded for learning.
71%

Managers need to understand what their employees are learning by taking an executive version of their learning curriculum.
70%

Learning needs to blend multiple modalities in all learning use cases.
68%

Learning should consider the digital prowess of the learner.
68%

4 or 5 on a 5-point scale
Source: Brandon Hall Group, Upskilling and Reskilling Study

1 Ensure tight alignment between business goals and learning outcomes.

Personalization cannot exist without alignment and that alignment starts at the top.

A well-developed learning strategy is the number-one element in personalized learning, rated as important or critical by 90% of companies.

Not far behind that is the need for learning to highly align with the objectives of the business (88%) and the personal and professional goals of learners (84%).

To establish this alignment, companies need to include business leaders and other stakeholders in the development of the learning strategy. This helps L&D understand the needs of the business better and enables stakeholders to understand how learning can respond to those needs.

Additionally, learner feedback should be incorporated into the learning strategy. A company can't meet the needs of learners if they don't know what they are. Having a deep understanding of the different audiences throughout the organization will help create alignment between business goals and how the workforce will achieve them. Being able to articulate this alignment to learners gives them the critical "what's in it for me" factor often missing from learning, which drives engagement.

This exercise of alignment also helps crystallize the metrics of success before the learning programs are developed. Knowing what outcomes are expected and how they will be measured not only makes it easier to measure learning's impact but they can be used to shape personalized learning experiences.

Organizations where the learning strategy includes and aligns with learner objectives are **4 times** more likely to say their strategy is effective in achieving business outcomes.

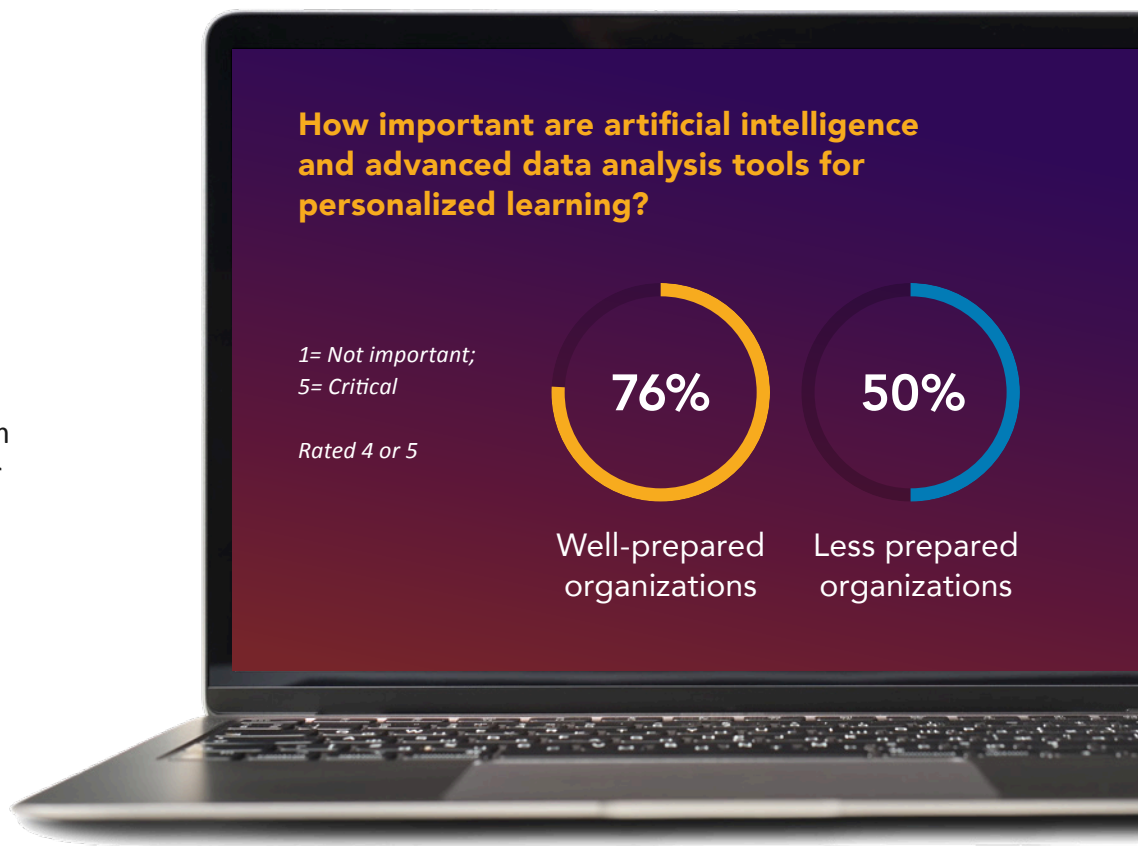## 2 Leverage the right technology.

Any solid learning strategy requires a technology road map that lays out how the strategy can be executed. Creating the right learner experience not only requires the right strategy, but also the right technology to make it a reality. Sixty percent of companies cite a lack of the right technology ecosystem as highly challenging in their efforts to support personalized learning.

The kind of highly blended, contextual and accessible experiences that are effective requires a great deal of thought when it comes to technology. A single LMS may not be enough. With an ecosystem that increasingly includes more video, microlearning, simulations and other interactions outside of the class and course, companies must be prepared to perform robust due diligence on their technology selections.

Another technology aspect that is critical to personalization is data — what is captured and how it is used. Consumer-facing technologies use a wide array of detailed information that feeds algorithms to deliver completely personalized experiences. The learning function must recognize the need and value of this kind of data as well. Without things such as machine learning powering the technology, personalization is a cumbersome, manual process. This expanded use of data means companies must get a better handle on the data they have and how valid it is. Artificial intelligence is only as intelligent as the data fed into it. Brandon Hall Group research finds companies that believe their learning approach is making them well-prepared for the future of work are much more likely to recognize the importance of machine learning and artificial intelligence.

How important are artificial intelligence and advanced data analysis tools for personalized learning?

1= Not important;
5= Critical

Rated 4 or 5

76%
Well-prepared organizations

50%
Less prepared organizations

3 Managers and supervisors must play a critical role.

One big blind spot when it comes to learning for most organizations is the role of the manager. And while much time and energy are spent on leadership development and programs to develop good managers, very little thought is given to the role managers play in their employees' learning.

Part of a good coaching strategy should include discussion and feedback around learning programs, not just performance and workflows. Knowing that their manager is aware and involved in the learning programs makes them more personal and contextual for the learner.

Additionally, as companies strive to have learning occur more within the flow of work, managers must be involved. No one is better positioned to understand just what the flow of work is and how and when learning will fit in to and support it than managers. Managers are much closer to the world employees live in day-to-day than the Learning function could ever be, so managers become an indispensable resource for designing contextual, in-the-flow-of-work learning.

82%

of companies who are ready for the future of work say it is critical managers give frequent feedback.

60%

believe their managers are aware and involved in what their employees are learning.

Authors and Contributors

David Wentworth (david.wentworth@brandonhall.com) wrote this report. He is Principal Learning Analyst at Brandon Hall Group, focusing on all aspects of learning and the technology that supports it. David has been in the human capital field since 2005 and joined Brandon Hall Group as senior learning analyst in early 2012.

Mike Martin is an experienced eCommerce/tech/SaaS director with a proven track record developing employees, building teams, growing sales, delighting customers and launching innovative programs and products in world-renowned companies. Celebrating 20+ years in leadership, learning and human performance, Mike practices what he preaches, currently serving as Head of Customer Experience and Learning at SAP Litmos. Mike lives in Chico, CA, with his wife, Angie; and their two sons, Wesley and Wyatt.

Mike Cooke (mike.cooke@brandonhall.com) contributed to this report. He is CEO and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group. Mike has more than 20 years' experience in human capital management and the research, software and technology industries. Before running Brandon Hall Group, Mike was co-founder of AC Growth, a research and consulting firm, and VP and General Manager of Field Operations at Bersin & Associates, a global analyst and consulting services firm in all areas of HCM.
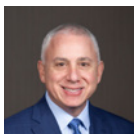
Michael Rochelle (michael.rochelle@brandonhall.com) contributed to this report. He is Chief Strategy Officer and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group. Michael leads a wide range of advisory support and strategic engagements for Fortune 1000 and small- to medium-sized organizations as well as leading and emerging solution providers across the HCM industry. Michael has more than 30 years' experience in HR, IT, sales, marketing, business development, and strategic and financial planning in Fortune 500 and venture-backed start-up organizations.

Richard Pachter (richard.pachter@brandonhall.com) edited this report. He is the Content Manager at Brandon Hall Group and is responsible for editing all types of content related to research. He has experience as a journalist, copywriter, editor, marketer, blogger and social media marketing manager. He also served as the business books columnist for the *Miami Herald* for more than a decade.

Emma Bui (emma.bui@brandonhall.com) is the Graphic Design Associate at Brandon Hall Group. She created the layout and graphics for this report.

About SAP Litmos

SAP Litmos develops eLearning solutions for top-performing companies. An established leader in the market since 2007, SAP Litmos offers the world's easiest-to-use LMS — SAP Litmos Training — and a comprehensive course library — SAP Litmos Training Content. Thousands of companies trust the solutions to centralize and deliver transformative training to employees, customers, and partners. Acquired by CallidusCloud in 2011, then by SAP in 2018, SAP Litmos continues to innovate award-winning learning technology and set the standard for customer experience and satisfaction. The solutions are used by more than 24 million people in 150 countries, across 35 languages.

SAP Litmos

Find more information at **litmos.com**

About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 27 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.

Some ways we can help …

MEMBERSHIP PACKAGE

Includes research library access, events, advisory support, a client success plan and more.

ADVISORY OFFERINGS

Custom Research Projects, including surveys and focus groups interviews. Organization Needs Assessment for Transformation, Technology Selection and Strategy.

EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Global recognition showcasing leading programs and practices with a library of case studies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Virtual and on-site certification programs, workshops and webinars supplemented with research-driven assessments and tools.

ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
recognizes world-class HCM programs that transform their organization and achieve breakthrough results. This designation is the next step beyond the HCM Excellence Awards, which focus on a single program, and looks at the department as a whole.

SMARTCHOICE® PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM
uniquely places HCM service and technology companies at the top of organizations' consideration list of vendors. It adds an unmatched level of credibility based on BHG's quarter of a century's experience in evaluating and selecting the best solution providers for leading organizations around the world.

HCMA PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS
are comprehensive educational programs that center around a multiphase knowledge test.