

Your Guide to Impactful Lean L&D





LGD MADE EASY

Your Guide to Impactful Lean L&D



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L&D Made Easy! Your Guide to Impactful Lean L&D

No matter the size of your organization, Learning and Development (L δ D) is important to your business and your employees. A strong L&D program can boost productivity, improve morale, reduce staff turnover, and help your organization achieve business goals more effectively.

However, not every organization has a large L δ D budget or an entire L&D staff. Some companies might have just one or two people handling learning. In smaller companies, the L&D function might be just one of the hats worn by an HR officer, executive, or internal subject matter expert (SME). If your company faces any of these constraints, building a bespoke L&D program may seem like a luxury.

When you're working with a small development budget or on a small L&D team, it can be tempting to limit workplace learning to just what's required by law, like regulatory compliance. Effective compliance training is essential, but if that's the only training you offer, you may not be meeting the needs of your organization or your workforce. Focusing solely on compliance and ignoring the learning and development needs of your employees can widen skill gaps and make a negative impact on performance outcomes. It can also lead to a reduction in engagement and morale amongst employees.

That's because employees are hungry for learning.

According to ManpowerGroup's 2023 Workplace Trends Report, 57% of employees reported <u>pursuing training outside of work</u>. A recent <u>Amazon and Workplace Intelligence</u> study also found that 78% of employees are concerned they lack the skills for career advancement while 64% of respondents reported being "extremely" or "somewhat likely" to leave their positions for more training and career mobility.

Offering a variety of continuous development opportunities for employees to build new skills and knowledge is not just optional: it's critical for any organization looking to stay competitive. So, how can teams with limited budgets, resources, or L&D infrastructure rise to the challenge to create comprehensive, high-impact L&D?

In this eBook, you'll learn how to take a lean, agile approach to learning, to maximize all the benefits of L&D for your organization.

The need for comprehensive training and development programs

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of employees reported pursuing training outside of work

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of respondents reported being "extremely" or "somewhat likely" to leave their positions for more training and career mobility

What is lean L&D?

You've probably heard the term "lean" applied to business practices, such as lean enterprise or lean manufacturing. But what do we mean when we talk about lean L δ D?

66 Lean is a way of thinking about creating needed value with fewer resources and less waste. And lean is a practice consisting of continuous experimentation to achieve perfect value with zero waste. Lean thinking and practice occur together.

The Lean Enterprise Institute

Lean thinking always begins with the customer. What are the customer's needs? What customer problems need to be solved? What skills or tools are needed to solve those problems and deliver the product?

A lean L&D strategy is the same. Lean L&D is tightly focused on the business needs of your organization. You are producing exactly the learning that is needed to serve those needs, and nothing that is not needed.

"I always think of lean L Δ D as being resourceful," says Dr. Jill Stefaniak, Chief Learning Officer at Litmos. "The design team has to be resourceful and cognizant of the realities within their organization at that particular time."

Lean instructional design might indicate that a business is working within limitations, however, it can be seen through a positive lens: being very intentional with resource allocation, and the design decisions that are being made.



I always think of lean L&D as being resourceful. The design team has to be resourceful and cognizant of the realities within their organization at that particular time.



Building your lean L&D program

Because your organizational needs are central to lean L&D, you'll need to consider a few things before leaping in and building content.

The importance of planning

Every strong L&D program, lean or not, benefits from a well-thought-out planning process.

However, planning is even more important when it comes to lean L&D, which zones in on the specific needs of your business and your learners. You can't simply set up a generalized L&D program when you're taking a lean approach. Instead, you need to take some time to investigate your organization, its existing learning, and your limitations.

To answer these questions, you'll have to lay some groundwork.

What **business needs** your training meets

What skills your workers need

> How your existing training (if you have it) already meets those needs

How existing training outside of your organization meets those needs





I'm a big believer in having a full strategy before you jump in. The easy thing is to go build the training or to hand over a course. The harder thing is to do the consulting work and understand what you're measuring, why you are doing this in the first place, and how you will know you are successful when you're done.



Pamela Ramsbott Head of Global Talent Development

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Here are some questions to ask as you start that investigation

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How will a new training initiative impact other departments in the organization?

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When is the best time to roll out a new L&D strategy in your company or industry?

By understanding the parameters of your organization, it's possible to design a program that can work for your team without getting overwhelmed by options.



How will a new L&D program impact any other training initiatives your team may be involved in?

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What are the realities (budget, time limits, number of learners, etc.) that might constrain the development of an L&D initiative?

Understanding your organization's learning needs

"If you don't know what you're building learning for, it's really hard to do a good job," says Ramsbott.

Before you can build an effective lean training program, you need to know what challenges will be solved with L&D. What do you want to achieve with this training program? Your learning goals must be clearly defined. This means you need to approach your organization as a consultant: digging into organizational challenges, analyzing data, and speaking to stakeholders.

"I spend a lot of time upfront trying to understand 'What's the business need that we're going after?'" says Ramsbott. "What is the human performance gap?"

It's your job to look at specific data that will help you pinpoint the skills gaps in your organization.

Take the example of customer support training

Customer support requires your team to have specific skills. While you can build a customer training program around the general skills that customer support representatives need to do their jobs, it's much more effective to examine the specific skill gaps in your organization.

Maybe your customer support team is very good at certain skills, like technical knowledge about your products. A lean L&D strategy shifts focus from that skill and provides more training in areas where your team struggles.

To find those skills gaps, you might talk to managers, look at customer feedback, or listen to recorded calls. Incorporating this input will contribute to a stronger customer support training program than if you had simply created training based on general customer support skills.

Assessing the necessity of training

approach requires an L&D professional to be honest about whether learning will actually solve a problem. Sometimes training isn't the answer. In a lean L&D org, you're solving not only for the right business challenge but for the right business impact.

Pam Ramsbott

A problem might require other solutions

- Adjustment of systems, roles, or business processes
- Offering more recognition or rewards to team members
- Improving communication between silos or between leadership and team members

"The most important thing is for me to understand the problem I'm trying to solve and ensure that a learning intervention is the right solution," says Ramsbott.

Trying to use training to fix everything might be harmful; you run the risk of over-training or building a training program that doesn't address the root of a given problem. You may see an example of this issue in an organization that provides system training but does not provide employees with the most recent update or version of that system, making the training content irrelevant. "In this case, the training can only solve the business problem if the employee also has the right system," says Ramsbott. That dilemma is precisely what a lean L&D strategy tries to avoid.

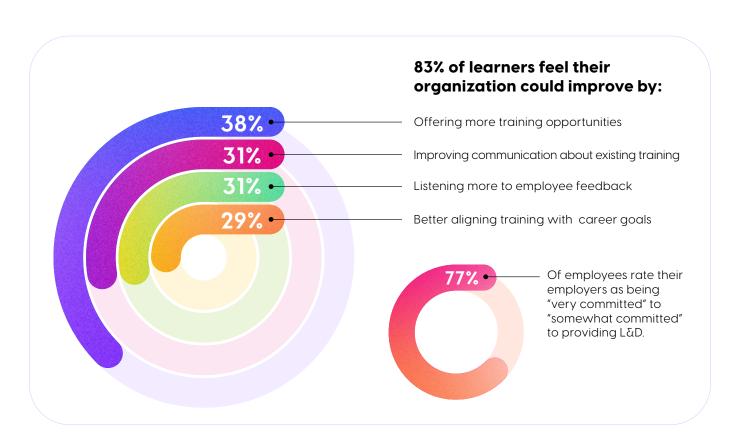
"You really have to understand your business needs, and whether learning is going to solve it," says Ramsbott.

Meeting your industry's needs and requirements

Most employees believe their organizations are committed to training. A recent Harris Poll found that 77% of employees rate their employers as being "very committed" to "somewhat committed" to providing L&D.

However, this doesn't mean learners always get the training they need; 83% of learners feel their organization could improve by: offering more training opportunities (38%), improving communication about existing training (31%), listening more to employee feedback (31%), and better aligning training with workers' career goals (29%).

It's important to ensure that L&D programs are tailored to the specific needs and requirements of your industry and sectors.



Here are some key considerations for industry leaders looking to employ a lead L&D strategy:

Regulatory compliance

The financial services sector is one of the most highly regulated industries.— and regulations are constantly changing. It's critical that FinServ companies can prove compliance with current regulations. Lean L&D must prioritize getting FinServ employees up to speed with the most recent standards.

Data security

FinServ providers and financial institutions are constantly under attack by cyber criminals. Lean L&D leaders should assess their current security training and data security competencies of their employees to determine whether additional training is needed to help protect important data.

Customer experience

User retention has been a challenge for FinTech and FinServ organizations. Customer experience content can empower employees to meet customer expectations and improve customer support.

Cybersecurity

Tempted by valuable patient data, cyber criminals have started targeting healthcare providers. Lean L&D should focus on providing healthcare workers with the skills and competencies that allow them to effectively protect data and strengthen cyber defenses.

Worker retention

It's been a tough few years for the healthcare industry. Worker burnout and stress have added to a growing personnel shortage in the industry. By building personalized learning paths for workers, healthcare organizations can cultivate internal management, to retain and grow their workforces.

Technological disruption

Technology is constantly changing, and medical providers are having a hard time keeping up. By providing healthcare workers with ongoing training, medical groups can stay on the cutting edge of healthcare technology.

Generative Al

Generative AI has taken the world by storm, and people from every industry are scrambling to build their skills. The right training can empower tech and software professionals to harness AI's potential responsibly, while helping your company keep up with rapidly shifting best practices and applications for AI in tech.

The skills gap

Tech moves fast, and that means there's a constant skills gap in the industry. Lean L&D can help leaders focus in on those missing skill sets, narrowing the gap by training your workforce on the most in-demand tools and skills for your business needs.

While this is not an exhaustive list of every industry or every L&D consideration per industry, it may serve as a helpful reference for learning leaders who are looking to target their training to meet sector-specific requirements. Regardless of your industry, it's likely that you'll need to carefully consider the compliance, health and safety, security, and technology needs of your organization when devising an L δ D strategy.

Defining learning objectives

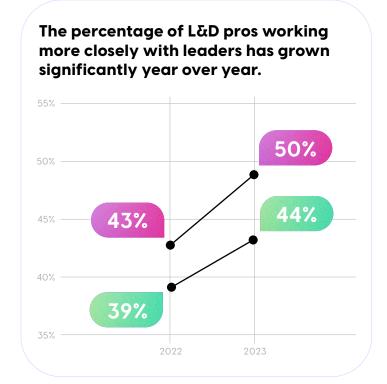
Once you've identified business needs and skills gaps, you'll be able to create your learning objectives. You should also know how you are going to measure those objectives beforehand.

Learners will also have their own learning objectives. Work with managers to identify their teams' strengths and weaknesses and create objectives for each. You may want to ask learners' input on their own learning objectives; it's likely that some of your team members are interested in specific skills.

Getting leadership to the table

Designing learning isn't just about what you need to plan a program. It's also about who should be included in the planning process. L&D should not be operating in a vacuum, although sometimes it can feel that way to an overworked learning pro.

The good news is that the percentage of L&D pros working more closely with leaders has grown significantly year over year: 50% of L δ D pros worked with exec leadership in



2023, compared with 43% in 2022; 44% worked with CHRO in 2023 compared to 39% in 2022.

This trend is still on the upswing; nearly 60% of L&D pros have the ear of the C-suite in 2024. If you're looking to launch a lean L&D program, use that influence to your advantage by nurturing allies in leadership positions.

66 I think that sometimes L&D professionals feel a lot of pressure. They feel that all the responsibility falls upon them, when in truth, an effective L&D strategy should be integrated across the organization and supported by leadership.

Dr. Jill Stefaniak





30 Day average onboarding time



150 Active users



2 Admins



100% Employee compliance Canidium is a leading software consultancy that partners with clients to improve business processes and deliver technology-driven solutions, such as Sales Performance Management, Pricing, Insurance, and Professional Services. With only two administrators running L&D, Canidium needed a solution that would make it easy to build and deliver training to their 150 users. Litmos's course authoring tool streamlined the process of iterative content creation, while Litmos's off-the-shelf content allowed the Canidium team to expand its course offerings.

Learn more

Going beyond leadership buy-in

We often talk about getting buy-in from leadership for learning. Sometimes this is an after-the-fact suggestion – such as finding a C-suite champion for an existing L&D program. However, according to Dr. Stefaniak, senior leadership should be deeply involved in L&D planning at the start of the process.

"If L&D is going to be a strategic asset to your organizational plan, then executive leadership needs to get involved from the very beginning with those initial conversations," she said.

The reason? Leadership is adept at strategy; a company's leadership understands organizational needs, limits, and future goals. L&D might be thinking of how to meet current learning needs, but leadership can envision how an L δ D program should evolve to meet future training needs.

66 It's important that you have the right people at the table for those conversations - people who know about the challenges going on within your organization, who care about those challenges, and who can help make those necessary changes take place.

Dr. Jill Stefaniak.

"Working with leadership is also an opportunity for L&D professionals to tell leaders exactly what is needed from them to make learning a success. Do you need your CEO to sponsor a learning intervention? Lead a seminar? This is the time for those asks," says Ramsbott.

"The more specific and explicit that we can be as learning professionals, the more successful we'll all be," she says. "Oftentimes, leaders need as much direction as anyone else."

Bringing mid-managers into the conversation often yields tangible benefits, as well, especially in revenue-related functions.

When an L α D leader aligns their sales training strategy with the expertise and expectations of sales and CX managers, that training content will likely be more relevant to the teams it serves. More relevant sales and CX training can lead to shorter ramp up times for customer-facing team members and can empower them to deliver better customer experiences that lead to higher customer retention and satisfaction.

By including mid-managers in the L Δ D planning process, you're also creating a potential champion for your program. Having advocates across the enterprise who are invested in your L&D program, and who model learning behavior to their teams, can increase learner engagement and ownership.





34k+ Courses taken



1,650+ Employees



7 Admins



140 Locations globally

SouthernCarlson is a leading distributor of construction and industrial supplies. The company has more than 1,650 language-diverse employees throughout the U.S. and Mexico but just seven administrators handling L&D. Previously, the company used on the job training. This approach didn't scale as the company grew. With more than 140 locations, SouthernCarlson needed a learning solution that could easily roll out consistent content to their learners in both English and Spanish, while allowing L&D to track learning. Litmos was also able to automate learning assignments based on roles and locations within the organization, making it easier for a small L&D team to administer learning.

Learn more

How does compliance fit into lean L&D?

Compliance is by nature, lean. It's a must-have. You need to provide the training to comply with the regulations that govern your business. However, it's important to fit this training into your L&D program in a way that makes sense. When it comes to building compliance training, you should focus on four key areas:



These four fundamental criteria for compliance are consistent across most businesses, affect most employees, and should be at the core of any effective compliance program. "Compliance is both an organizational priority and an ethical responsibility—one that is woven into the fabric of your learning culture," says Dr. Jen Farthing, Litmos' Vice President of Product Management.

Not sure where to start with compliance training?

Check out our "Compliance Made Easy" guide to gain a better understanding of the benefits, core topics, and best practices of compliance training. Whether you're starting from scratch or taking a fresh look at your compliance training program, this guide will provide the insights your team needs to get started.

ACCESS YOUR GUIDE \rightarrow



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Think of your Code of Conduct training not as a check-the-box obligation, but an opportunity to embed your culture into your learning materials. When executed with intention, these materials not only guide employees on appropriate workplace behavior, but help manage expectations consistently and transparently, from onboarding through annual training.



Dr. Jen FarthingVP of Product Management

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Lean L&D and the skillsbased organization

A skill-based organization places skills, rather than job descriptions, at the center of its approach to work. This, is, at its heart, a lean approach, because it frees a worker from the constraints of their role and allows them to tackle jobs they have the skills to address – even if those jobs might have fallen outside of their previous job description.

The skills-based approach has become increasingly attractive to companies since the great role reshuffle of the pandemic: 93% of respondents to a Deloitte survey say that moving away from jobs to a skills-based approach is important to their organizations. According to LinkedIn, skill sets are predicted to change by 50% between 2023 and 2027, and 89% of L α D pros agree that proactively building skills will help orgs navigate the future of work.

The benefits of a skills-based approach to work



Employees can be seen as well-rounded people with their own collections of skills, rather than being defined by their role



Embracing a skills-based approach can break down organizational knowledge silos



By deploying people based on their skills and capabilities, organizations give employees tasks that better match their interests, which can improve engagement on the job



Instead of attempting to train or hire for a specific selection of skills, organizations train for skills they need and hire for others to become more agile

Which skills should be targeted in L&D programs?

It's tempting to train for too many skills in an attempt to be good at everything. Ramsbott has one important piece of advice, however:

"Don't boil the ocean."

Take the time to understand which skills your team truly needs, and which will make the biggest difference. Be ruthless when targeting skills. It's important to be realistic about which skills you can train for well and the best ways to deliver that training. Start by asking yourself how many skills do you have the time and budget to train for.

Remember – not every skill your team needs should be covered by your L&D content. Some skills are better addressed through other means, such as coaching or feedback from a manager. Know what works best for the skills you are teaching.

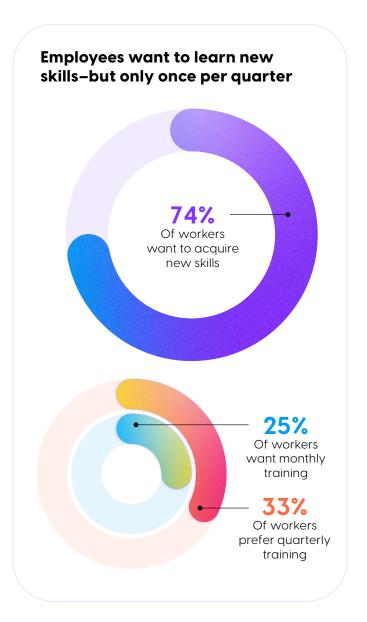
Starting small

It's tempting to get carried away and make big plans for your new L&D program, however, it's best to start slowly.

Most employees are eager to learn but overdoing it might not go over well with your learners: while 74% of workers want to acquire new skills, they also want to learn at a slower pace. According to PwC, most organizations offer training once every month, but most workers prefer quarterly training.

Choose your most important learning objectives, and build out those modules first, taking the time to get them right, then roll them out to your learners and managers. This is a time to listen to feedback and measure the impact of these initial modules.

Once you've gotten the initial learning designed, you can expand to content that addresses other learning objectives or add the bells and whistles you're excited about.



Extending L&D across the enterprise

Lean L&D is an iterative process - building on existing structures and processes - so once that initial "start small" L&D strategy has been refined and executed, it can be scaled up and applied to other departments to deliver learning across the enterprise.

While the skills being trained for in each function may differ from organization to organization, those tasked with L&D can use their LMS to scale their approach and provide consistent and holistic training across the business

Launch your lean L&D program, one step at a time.

Our new Organizational L&D Strategy Checklist offers foundational steps for development, implementation, and measurement of your L&D program(s), as well as ongoing steps for fostering a culture of learning and growth.

ACCESS YOUR CHECKLIST →



BUSINESS OPERATIONS

- → Leadership
- → Decision-making
- → Coaching
- → Strategy
- → Problem solving

SALES & MARKETING

- → Communication
- → Product knowledge
- → Social selling
- → Active listening
- → Problem solving

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- → Emotional intelligence
- → Creativity
- → Empathy
- → Product knowledge
- → Relationship-building

skills across key business

areas

Essential

functional



HUMAN RESOURCES

- → Interpersonal Communication
- → Emotional intelligence
- → Coaching
- → Strateay
- → Conflict resolution

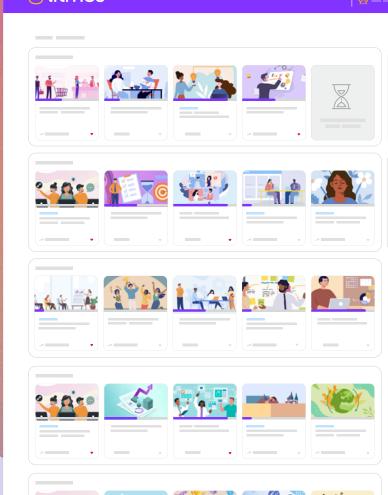
FINANCE

- → Attention to detail
- → Analytical skills
- → Forecasting
- → Organization
- → Financial reporting

TECHNOLOGY

- → Critical thinking
- → Project management
- → Problem-solving
- → Adaptability
- → Teamwork

blitmos



What does launching lean L&D look like?

Implementation of a program is always daunting, no matter how big your L&D department is. But for the small L&D team, or the lone administrator who owns learning, rolling out training can be extra stressful.

Here are some considerations that may make launching and managing your lean L&D program a bit easier.



Make L&D easy for instructional designers

Creating and rolling out learning involves a number of tasks, from building training content to assigning learning pathways. Many of these tasks can be time-consuming and manual. Making the L&D function leaner often means choosing technology that reduces the administrative burden on your team. Finding ways to automate tedious manual tasks, for example, is a small but meaningful way to make the jobs of L δ D administrators easier.

L&D professionals can use design documents with their team and organizational stakeholders to ensure alignment between organizational goals, learning objectives, and desired outcomes. These tools can also be used for storyboarding eLearning content and writing scripts, which can be reviewed and edited before moving into production.

Using Litmos' Content Authoring Tool allows for L&D professionals to engage in rapid prototyping through the creation of templates that can be used to promote consistent messaging and branding across training content.



Make L&D easy for learners

Not everyone gets excited about new learning, and some people may even resist it. Decide ahead of time what your implementation plan is. This includes developing communication plans to inform employees of upcoming $L\delta D$ changes, and it means that leadership should be ready to make those announcements and be intentional about how they discuss learning.

Employees hear the messages their bosses give them about learning. When a manager doesn't believe learning is important, employees know it. But if leadership communicates the importance of a new learning initiative, chances are you will have much better engagement from your learners.



Make L&D easy for admins

How do you search for information? You probably ask an Al assistant for help. Conversational Al has made it simpler for us to find the information we're looking for without having to overthink search terms or browse through pages of irrelevant search results.

The same is true in L&D. Litmos's new AI Assistant is a conversational, natural language chat interface that uses Generative AI to quickly discover relevant information from an organization's internal content library. Learners can ask questions, like "How can I make a pivot table?" and receive answers with citations, pointing them towards a prioritized list of learning materials from their learning library that contains that information. Administrators can ask something like, "Help me find information for new managers on delivering feedback" and discover the most relevant management or soft skills courses to assign their learners.

Rather than browsing courses and searching for the information yourself, the Al Assistant surfaces the information quickly and also allows admins to recommend a course, assign to individuals, or teams and track progress on those assignments.

66 The Al Assistant is going to save time because the conversational approach helps you drill down to exactly what you want -- whether that's information or a course recommendation, then seamlessly to the next right action.

Dr. Jen Farthing



Make L&D easy for managers

When do you know your training has made an impact? How do you know that you have effectively created and rolled out training that is meeting organizational goals? "The finish line is not when the training is over. The finish line is when your manager continues to reinforce the training, and the behavior shifts over time," says Ramsbott.

Managers are your closest allies when it comes to reinforcing training. They see your learners every day and can reinforce training with coaching. This is especially true in lean L δ D, since every company has managers, regardless of the company's size or the size of its L&D team. Even more importantly, employees value the input of their managers, 80% of employees surveyed by Forrester report that manager feedback has a strong impact on them, but only 40% say that managers provided that feedback.



In that same study, 73% of respondents said having manager-led professional development coaching made an impact, while only 40% of those respondents actually received manager coaching.

"I think the real opportunity is when a manager sees themselves as the reinforcer of the training or the developer of the workforce," says Ramsbott. "That's where the rubber meets the road – when the manager takes that next step."

Litmos Al Assistant



Whether you're an employee trying to find information quickly, or a manager assigning learning to others and monitoring their progress, Litmos Al Assistant can help you more quickly and efficiently improve learner experience, empower managers, and make learning more efficient.

Al Assistant





With Litmos Al Assistant, you can...

Maximize learning for all users

Be more efficient, surface needed information quicker, and come away with more targeted learning materials needed for better job performance.

Elevated learning experience

Use natural language to ask questions about in-library courses, enabling quick recall of key info and freeing content from its course container for discovery.

Empower managers, team leads, and admins with learner insights Discover content, quickly assign courses, and track progress using natural language prompts.

Next generation UI

Designed with the user experience in mind, Litmos Al Assistant allows quick navigation from results to chats, and organizes previous chat exchanges for easy access.

Secure content and data

The AI Assistant is powered by Litmos' proprietary DPR, SOC II, CCPA compliant AI infrastructure, meaning customers can trust that their content and data is private and protected. Unlike public generative AI products, customer content is not shared outside the customer's tenant, allowing for secure uploading of customer content.

Control of content

The Al Assistant allows admins to have in-depth control of which courses are loaded into the Al assistant, who has access and if learners can ask questions about the courses before they complete the course.

Learn more

New chat

What can I do with Litmos AI Assistant?

Iterating for continuous L&D improvement

Agile business is built on iteration; you create your initial offering, release it, and then use feedback to iterate on it, improving that product every single time.

Lean L&D is the same. Your L&D is a living project; you can't create it once and leave it. You should consistently work to refine your content and delivery, and you should always be assessing organizational needs to see what new content needs to be built.

Make sure you're collecting data, not just from the KPIs you decided on earlier, but also feedback from learners and managers. What worked well for them? What didn't work? Creating a continuous feedback loop will help your L δ D program grow and improve.

Keeping the design of your projects simple from the start, can also help your team prioritize impact over time. "Avoid over-designing when taking a lean L&D approach. It may be tempting to sink time and effort into shiny new products, but they may not be needed for the intervention to be successful. Be thoughtful about what elements are really needed for the learning program you're creating," advises Ramsbott.

Lean L&D is resourceful L&D

When you take a lean approach to L&D, you're taking the time to pay attention to what matters: what skills need to be taught, which compliance training is most important, and how to deliver training in the most effective way.

It's an intentional way of creating learning, and – when done well – a lean L&D strategy should address your most pressing skills gaps, while involving your most important stakeholders in the process.







Dr. Jill Stefaniak Chief Learning Officer

Jill Stefaniak is the Chief Learning Officer at Litmos. Her interests focus on the professional development of L&D professionals and instructional design decision-making. She also serves as an Associate Professor in the Learning, Design, and Technology program at the University of Georgia. This content represents the opinions of Jill Stefaniak. It carries no endorsement of the University of Georgia.



Pamela Ramsbott Head of Global Talent Development

Pam has more than 20 years of experience in the Learning and Development space leading learning teams in both growth-stage technology companies and larger, established organizations. Pam holds a Master's Degree in Instructional Technologies and Adult Learning and is also a certified leadership coach.



Dr. Jen Farthing VP of Product Management

Jen is an experienced edtech leader specializing in producing solutions that help people acquire the skills they need to succeed at work in efficient and effective ways. From educational publishing to corporate learning, Jen has led diverse, cross-functional teams for more than 20 years—most recently creating award-winning workplace learning products. A lifelong learner, Jen earned her doctorate in Leadership and Learning in Organizations from Vanderbilt while working full time and pivoting her global teams to successful remote-first organizations.



Built for ease of use, Litmos integrates innovative technology and quality content to deliver an exceptional all-in-one learning experience that makes training easier, quicker, and more impactful.

Are you ready to launch your lean L&D strategy?

Speak to an expert

Start a free trial

www.litmos.com

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