LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Global Sentiment Survey

FOCUS

AI in L&D:
The State of Play

By Donald H Taylor and Egle Vinauskaite

Introduction

Key findings of this research

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has seldom been out of the news since 30 November 2022, when ChatGPT became publicly available. In the frantic months that followed, it seemed impossible to keep up with developments in AI. Use of OpenAI's ChatGPT reached 100 million active users two months after launch. In contrast, Google+ took a year longer to reach the same point. Ten months after ChatGPT's launch, in late October 2023, ChatGPT had 180 million users. Even as the growth of subscribers tailed off, however, the rate of change did not seem to slow, with new announcements about the capacities of AI coming weekly and often daily. The growth seemed relentless. Ethan Mollick, associate professor at The Wharton School focused on AI, wrote in despair that while he read widely and deeply about the latest developments in AI, "the increasing pace is insane.... I barely keep up".

For the PR industry, and for those trading opinions online, this explosion of interest was a godsend. Articles and counter articles raged back and forth. Some predicted the impending collapse of society through mass automation; others claimed a Utopia of a lighter working load was at hand, while still others said that AI was simply one more product of tech hype.

Like everyone else, the L&D profession was fascinated by AI. The option of 'Artificial Intelligence' leapt an unprecedented 4.5% in the 2023 L&D Global Sentiment Survey (GSS) – reversing a trend that had seen it tracking predictably downwards. But the GSS asks "What will be hot in workplace L&D next year?" It reports on sentiment, not action. Indeed, amid all this noise, facts were hard to come by. They still are. In particular, it has been difficult to know what is happening with AI in L&D. Undoubtedly the power of technology has been growing, but is it being put to use?

This report sets out to answer that question, to explore L&D practitioners' attitudes to, and uses of, AI. It is based largely on the results of a survey conducted in September and October 2023, with the addition of information from interviews. While the authors believe that AI will have a deep, lasting effect on workplace L&D, this report does not speculate about what might be possible in the future, nor does it make any claims for or against AI.

Rather, this report looks at how AI is being used in workplace L&D today, and concludes that it is in its infancy. Of course, some extraordinary things are being done with AI within L&D. But our research suggests that where AI is currently being used by L&D, it is largely for the routine tasks of content creation and increased efficiency.

If there is one message L&D practitioners should take away from this report, it is that there is no need to panic - you are not falling far behind your peers, for the simple reason that very few are making major strides with AI. There is every need, however, to act, if only in a small way, to familiarise yourself with what AI has to offer. In this report, we outline how L&D practitioners are currently using AI, and offer some suggestions for starting on the journey yourself.

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About the survey

What did we ask? Who answered?

The main quantitative piece of this research was an online survey conducted online between 19 September and 12 October 2023. The survey consisted of nine questions. The first two were about demographics, followed by four core questions asking respondents to share:

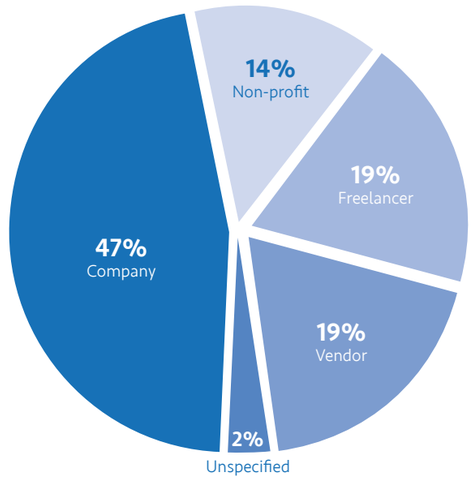
- Q3 Their progress with AI in workplace L&D (multiple choice)
- Q4 The current ways in which they were using AI in L&D (free text)
- Q5 The benefits they expected to see from using AI in L&D (multiple choice)
- Q6 Barriers they had experienced in working with AI (free text)

Three additional questions asked them to share:

- Q7 Resources they would recommend to other L&D decision-makers (free text)
- Q8 Whether they felt more or less positive about L&D compared with the previous year (multiple choice)
- Q9 Any further comments (free text)

The survey was publicised largely via social media, with some promotion via newsletters, meaning that the 185 respondents were self-selecting and almost certainly not representative of the overall population of L&D practitioners. They were split across the following types of organisations:

Figure 1: Where respondents worked



In total, therefore, 61% of respondents were workplace employers (whether for-profit or otherwise). Of these, 33, or 18%, came from roles carrying significant responsibility. Respondents were with responsible for learning across their organisation (typically several thousand individuals) and/or they ran an L&D team of at least 10 people. In this report we call these 'key roles'.

About the report

The opening three sections of the report outline the quantitative results. It then offers more detailed interpretation and advice for L&D practitioners, exploring the use of AI in the learning experience design (LXD) process and beyond.

All respondents' quotes are given anonymously. They are largely verbatim, only edited where spelling and punctuation changes were needed for clarity.

Where are we now

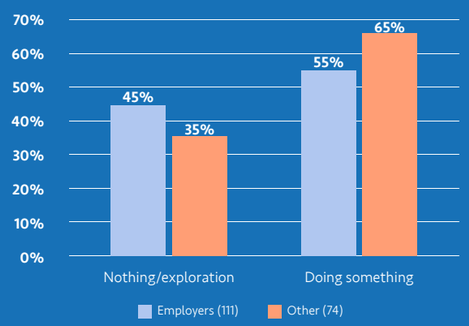
The state of play of AI in L&D

Question 3 of the survey asked respondents: 'How would you describe your progress in using Artificial Intelligence in workplace L&D?', with 6 multiple choice answers possible:

- We are using AI extensively as an integral part of our work
- We are using AI in some parts of our work
- We are piloting/testing using AI
- We haven't begun exploring the role of AI in L&D
- We have experimented with tools such as ChatGPT but haven't implemented anything
- We have no intention of using AI as part of L&D

Although the answers were not explicitly grouped in this way in the survey, the first three answers can all be considered as 'doing something', and the last three as 'exploring/ doing nothing'.

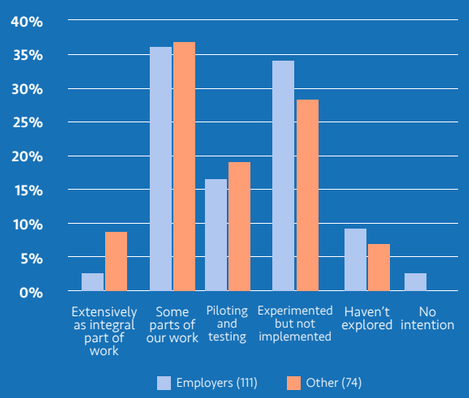
Figure 2: Progress in using AI in L&D - summary of Q3



The summary of results in Fig 2 shows that almost half our survey respondents had not started using AI by the time of the survey in September/October 2023. Bear in mind that this is a self-selecting survey. Mostly, it will be answered by those with an interest in Artificial Intelligence. Even so, only 55% of employers were doing something with AI. The rest were either doing nothing, or exploring possibilities. Similarly, 65% of non-employers (freelancers and vendors) were using it in some way and 35% were at most exploring what it had to offer.

The difference between employers and non-employers answering the survey is clearer when we look in detail at the responses in Fig 3. Generally, the group of vendor and freelancers who chose to respond to the survey rate themselves as further advanced than those in the workplace, particularly in answering 'We are using AI extensively as an integral part of our work'. Otherwise, however, the pattern of voting is very similar between the two groups of respondents. The low vote by both employers and others for 'We are piloting/testing using AI' may be caused by interpreting the word 'pilot' as a very formal process in contrast to the looser 'We have experimented with tools such as ChatGPT but haven't implemented anything', which employers are happier than others to admit to.

Figure 3: How would you describe your progress in using AI in workplace L&D?



What are those in key roles doing with AI? (These are people responsible for a substantial number of employees' learning, and/or with a large L&D team.) People in this position who have chosen to respond to the survey will probably be among the early adopters and innovators in L&D, the people leading the way. However, not one of the 33 respondents in key roles roles selected 'We are using AI extensively as an integral part of our work' - in other words, even when using AI, it currently sits alongside their main work.

All respondents had the option of entering free text to describe how they were using AI. The descriptions provided by the 11 respondents in key roles who had also chosen 'We are using AI in some parts of our work' were revealing. Nine of these explicitly mentioned that they were using AI for content generation or curation. Other key uses were idea generation, marketing and automating activities such as generating outlines and descriptions of courses.

Most of the activities taken by these key role holders, then, are focused on content and efficiency improvements. As we see in the next section, these two areas are the main expected benefits of AI use for all survey respondents.

However, within the descriptions provided by those in key roles, there are suggestions of further, deeper uses of AI, beyond creating content and improving efficiencies:

"Skills mapping Opportunity marketplace / identification."

"Core platforms with AI built in - experiments underway on new AI tech."

"To change SME knowledge into information at different levels of expertise."

"Coaching bot linked to new manager programme. Have also trialled a "difficult conversations" AI tool."

"In use: assessments, conversational practice bots, learning analytics, esp learner sentiment. Piloting: [Knowledge management], co-pilot."

This is the familiar pattern of new technology adoption. It is initially used where immediate substitution benefits are available - where an existing task can be done better, faster or cheaper with the new technology. Then, as familiarity grows, usage extends to other areas which may involve substitutions that are more complex (such as assessments) or new areas of work, such as adding a coaching bot to a learning programme which previously did not involve coaching.

Benefits

Why use AI in L&D?

Artificial Intelligence can be immensely powerful and, understandably, it is the stories about this power that capture people's attention. When Ammaar Reshi wrote and illustrated a children's book in 72 hours, it grabbed the public's imagination. It also generated a predictable backlash from artists and copywriters wary of copyright infringement. This, then, is the public face of AI - as a radical technology, fundamentally changing the way we carry out core, human tasks.

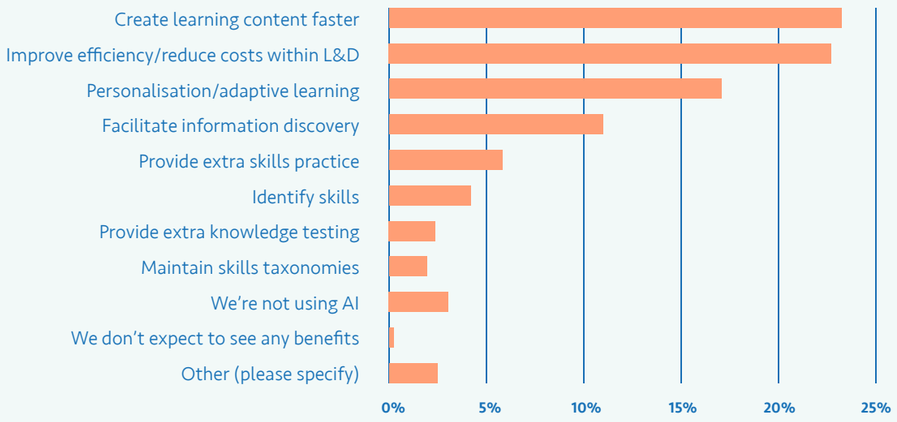
Within the world of learning and development, the potential uses of AI are almost limitless, with dramatic implications. There has been lots of speculation about the use of AI in the areas of personalisation, adaptive delivery and skills management, for example, where doing something well requires manipulating large amounts of data with a series of smart algorithms, and usually doing so at speed. How well does the reality of our activity today reflect these visions? The results of our survey suggest that the ambitions of L&D today are more down-to-earth.

Question 5 on the survey presented respondents with a randomly sorted list of 10 options, plus 'Other', and asked them to 'Select up to 3 benefits you expect to see from your use of AI in L&D'. The options were:

- Create learning content faster
- Facilitate information discovery
- Identify skills
- Improve efficiency/reduce costs within L&D
- Maintain skills taxonomies
- Personalisation/adaptive learning
- Provide extra knowledge testing
- Provide extra skills practice
- We don't expect to see any benefits
- We're not using AI
- Other (please specify)

The results for all respondents (see Figure 4 below) illustrate that while a great deal of commentary has been devoted to the possibility of using AI to help with complex tasks such as talent management and identifying and maintaining skills, these are not currently a priority for respondents. Instead, they are largely looking for AI to solve the immediate issues of content production and efficiencies. Partly this will be due to the simplicity of using ChatGPT for these tasks against the cost and complexity of activities such as adaptive learning and skills identification.

Figure 4: Expected benefits of using AI in L&D



It is worth noting that, for L&D, these two benefits of content production and efficiency overlap considerably. In total, 54 respondents both selected 'Improve efficiency/reduce costs within L&D' and offered a description of how they are using AI today. We created a word cloud of these descriptions, omitting the words 'learning', 'can', 'use' and 'using'.

Figure 5: Word cloud of descriptions of current AI use for respondents citing 'Improve efficiency/reduce costs within L&D' as a benefit of using AI

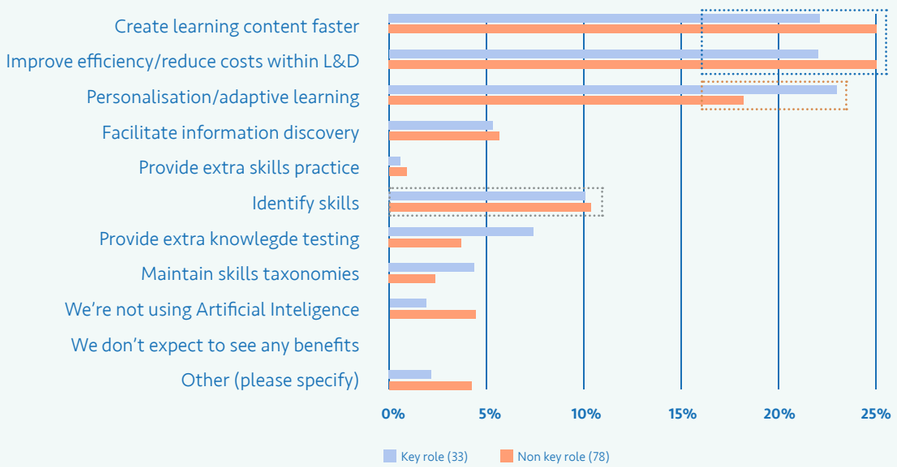
From this word cloud, it is clear that improving efficiency in L&D is largely synonymous with producing content efficiently. The 54 responses mention 'content' 32 times, for example, but 'mail' just 3 times. The most used AI tool is clearly ChatGPT, and its greatest uses when not focused on content creation appear to be around brainstorming ('idea' was mentioned in 11 comments) and training-related activities such as assessment (nine times).

In the workplace, the support of AI for brainstorming was largely focused on content creation, but for vendors, its use was wider:

> *"We are mostly using Chat GPT - as a "brainstorming buddy". It helps us with writing training scripts, agendas, proposals, learning objectives, generating ideas and themes."*

One content-focused efficiency mentioned only twice, but which might become more common in the workplace, was to streamline the collaboration with Subject Matter Experts by rapidly altering their technical content into 'more digestible content' or 'information at different levels of expertise'.

Figure 6: Expected benefits of using AI in L&D - by role in workplace



For the 111 respondents who work either in a pro-profit company or a non-profit organisation, the expected benefits differ depending on whether the respondent is in a key role or not, as shown in Figure 6, above.

As can be seen from the blue dotted line, respondents in key roles were less likely to be looking for efficiencies or for faster content creation. They were, however, more interested (orange dotted line) in using AI for personalisation.

The authors define respondents in 'key roles' as having significant responsibility. It is perhaps surprising, then, that there is little difference between key and non-key roles in their focus on identifying skills (grey dotted line). However we would need a larger survey population to understand whether this is simply due to sample size.

One thing clear to those in key roles is the significance of what is happening with AI, a clarity well expressed by a respondent with a global role in a major company:

> *"This is not an L&D thing, this is something that is transforming WORK full stop. It is another example of where business will drive and L&D will need to support."*

Barriers

What's in the way of AI?

Despite the perceived benefits and the general excitement about AI, in many cases its implementation isn't as smooth as perhaps desired. According to the survey, most L&D professionals face some barriers in their work with AI.

Three main types of barriers have emerged:

- Technology barriers
- Business barriers
- Individual barriers

While some respondents who hadn't faced any barriers in their work with AI, most people faced at least two or three from the list below. While the authors cannot offer solutions to overcome these barriers - indeed, many are still being debated at government or industry levels - the list may prove helpful for readers thinking through their upcoming implementation of AI.

Technology barriers

- Data privacy and security concerns: Worries about sharing proprietary or sensitive data with AI tools. This includes concerns about the confidentiality of people's data and inputs into AI, potential data breaches, and whether the AI tools comply with data protection regulations such as GDPR.
- IT security restrictions: Technical barriers that prevent exploration of AI tools, including long processes to ensure that new AI tools meet the organisation's IT security standards.
- Integration and compatibility issues: Challenges in integrating AI tools with existing systems or platforms. This is especially acute when it comes to data transfer between systems where each system collects and analyses data in different ways.
- Quality and efficacy concerns: Questions about the quality of text, visual and video AI outputs, especially in non-English languages and when working with highly specialised content.

Business barriers

- Cost concerns: The financial investment required to access and implement AI tools. This barrier includes three types of costs: the cost of software licences or tokens to access AI tools; software development cost required to create custom applications or integrations, and the cost of the time investment to become proficient with AI. Cost is a particularly common barrier for smaller or non-profit organisations.
- Regulatory and compliance barriers: Adhering to company policies, industry regulations, and compliance restrictions. While in some cases the barrier is compliance restrictions themselves, in others it's the overall lack of clarity about acceptable use.
- Ethical and copyright concerns: Worries about the ethical implications of using AI-generated outputs, specifically as they relate to IP ownership and potential infringement.
- Unclear business value: Difficulty in making a business case for AI, especially in light of the costs mentioned above. The perceived challenge is in going from AI as a 'trendy' tool that might help produce more content to communicating its strategic value to L&D and the business.
- Organisational resistance: Fears about job displacement, new technologies and change, including reluctance from people to do something wrong as they navigate unclear policies. The resistance is particularly felt when it comes from management, whose lack of awareness about, and buy-in for, AI prevents AI adoption initiatives from attracting much needed support.

Individual barriers

- Trust and reliability issues: This encompasses individual doubts about the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content deriving from low trust in the content used to train the AI. This includes concerns about factual accuracy, credibility of its sources, potential biases ('what content *isn't* being included?'), and efficacy of content recommendations to employees. This barrier is further compounded by potentially time-consuming efforts to check the output.
- Time constraints: It takes time to learn to work with AI efficiently. This constraint often includes the time required to practise the basic technical skills, experiment with AI enough to become comfortable with it, and to find good AI use cases.
- Overwhelming choice and pace of change: Rapid development of AI tools and the sheer number of options available. It's difficult to keep up with new tool releases and to choose which ones to experiment with.
- Lack of knowledge and skills: The need to understand AI's potential, and the technical skills to exploit it. This is a broad category that includes basic knowledge of AI in general and its specific use in the context of learning; how to get the most out of it, and how to integrate it into the flow of L&D work and digital learning solutions.

Broadly speaking, when it comes to individual barriers people face three main issues:

- Beginning: where do I start?
- Exploiting: how do I make the out of it?
- Maintaining: how do I keep up?

The authors attempt to address these three questions at the end of the report.

Finally, it's important to mention that several people pointed out that the term 'AI' is becoming increasingly overused in vendor marketing, adding to hype and making it more difficult to make sense of what AI actually is, what it can do and where it adds real value.

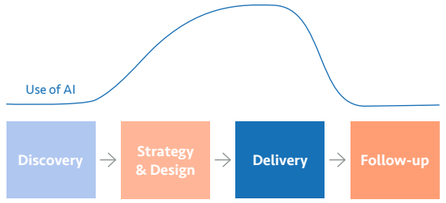
AI for LX design

The most common use of AI

Recommendations

Due to the nature of generative AI, the learning experience design (LXD) process seems to be its most natural use case in learning. The survey results can be broadly summarized in Figure 7. A few respondents use it for Discovery, more use it to support Strategy and Design, while more use generative AI for Delivery, which includes content production. There is only some AI use in the Follow-up stage, which includes evaluation.

Figure 7: Where L&D focuses use of AI in LXD (Learning Experience Design)



This resembles what has largely been happening with the LXD process even before AI. Many learning and content teams spend a lot of time on content production, and often not enough time on discovery and evaluation.

When people say they're using AI to generate content, they mean different things. This section will take you through each stage of the LXD process and offer an overview of the common practices are forming in our profession, what ideas are bubbling up – and where we can find opportunities to use AI better. If there is one thing we have learned from the past year of experimenting with AI, it's that it is only as good as human ingenuity and direction.

Generative AI in LXD: Discovery

Discovery is usually the first step of the learning experience design process. It involves gathering insights about the employees, their needs and context, as well as an understanding of the subject matter.

This phase often includes extensive conversations with stakeholders, SMEs and researching relevant content. Where posible, it should also include qualitative and quantitative user research.

According to the survey, most people who have used AI in the Discovery phase used it for the initial exploration and background research of the topic, such as sourcing content, explaining it or checking it for any gaps.

However, AI can be used in more comprehensive ways. Here are some examples shared by respondents:

- Profiling people and creating user personas
- Writing scripts for user interviews
- Researching and distilling knowledge and skills required to reach the learning objective
- Exploring nuance and different perspectives in the content
- Rewriting technical or specialised content provided by SMEs to make it more digestible

Generative AI in LXD: Learning Strategy & Design

The Learning Strategy & Design phase involves crafting a blueprint that aligns with the identified learning outcomes, and uses effective learning and engagement strategies.

In this phase, the learning designer usually takes the findings from the Discovery phase and creates a high-level creative and learning strategy for the programme, including key learning interactions and resources.

Here are the most common uses of AI at this stage among the respondents:

- Brainstorming ideas for content topics, learning activities or scenarios
- Creating a high-level course outline
- Generating quiz questions and assessments

More rare but interesting use cases include:

- Using AI as a 'thought partner', exploring ideas and subjects in a two-way conversation
- Offering personalised feedback based on how people perform in a scenario, what they upload as a course deliverable, or any open-ended question

"I have used AI to create some quick fire activities for a session I was running on motivation. Ensuring the AI understands the content through great prompting, led to the creation of a group activity that I used to help embed the new knowledge."

"We have implemented a bridge between Adapt Learning and ChatGPT to introduce a tool that enables us to build interactive activities where learners can submit documents (as per an instruction) which is then processed and offers feedback against a series of model answers we have provided."

Generative AI in LXD: Delivery

The Delivery phase involves creating the content, resources and any assets that support the learning experience.

This is often the most time-consuming part of the process that might involve not just learning designers, but also copywriters, graphic designers, video producers and editors, animators, voice-over artists and other creative professionals.

Unsurprisingly, this is where learning professionals are using generative AI the most:

- Content writing and scripting
- Translation
- Creating videos (mostly 'talking heads')
- Creating synthetic audio for voice-overs for courses
- Generating images for slides and courses

In addition, some respondents shared some ideas that might inspire more sophisticated use of generative AI:

- Streamlining handover from subject matter experts (SMEs) – simplifying their content if it's overly technical or rewriting it for people with different levels of expertise
- Making learning content more concise
- Manipulating documents: extracting, analysing and interrogating content and changing its format (for example, creating a presentation from text)
- Rewriting procedural or compliance content to be more targeted at and relevant to different roles
- Creating facilitation notes from lesson plans or slides for synchronous delivery
- Using third party AI tools not only for 'talking head' videos, but also for animations or for editing video footage using a text-based interface (e.g. using Vimeo AI)

"We use it to help us build learning content from scratch - it's great at bouncing ideas for activities off, creating incorrect assessment options (i.e. for multi-choice/select question types), and quickly establishing run sheets for us to build on and improve. We're finding ChatGPT to be a worthwhile partner to improve speed to delivery."

"We use AI to create voiceover "previsualisation" when creating multimedia for our courses - when stakeholders see a moving storyboard with a voiceover, there are less edits and cost during final production."

"It is quite good for developing interactive scenarios based on existing content. I role-play one side while the AI writes the other, with the results then implemented in Storyline."

"Giving the AI the procedure and a scenario, then seeing what it thinks a specific role should do in a defined circumstance. It tells me whether the procedure can be followed, or where the weaknesses are. I can feed back to the process owners and/or focus the training on the bits that are difficult to follow."

Generative AI in LXD:
Evaluation and follow-up

The evaluation and follow-up stage involves measuring the feedback, on and impact of, the learning solution and identifying areas for improvement.

Unfortunately, quality learning impact data is difficult to come by and interpret, and therefore learning impact measurement has historically relied on feedback forms more than data analysis.

In the case of generative AI, only a few of our respondents indicated that they used AI for evaluation at all. The ones that did used it in the ways detailed below. It's worth noting that generative AI makes it possible to analyse open-ended question fields at scale:

- Conducting a sentiment analysis on qualitative feedback
- Asking AI to suggest improvements based on insights extracted from qualitative feedback
- Asking AI to identify opportunities to personalise content
- Analysing and interrogating datasets for insights into user behaviour

Beyond LX design

What else is AI good for?

AI for learning personalisation

Personalised learning can take many forms, especially with AI. It can be done at the level of content, learning journey or even personalised feedback.

Personalising content and learning journey

According to the survey, L&D professionals are already extensively using AI for content curation. This most often involves using AI-enabled LMS functionality or a third party tool to recommend content based on people's profiles, online activity, performance needs and interests.

A less common use case, but one that a few respondents are experimenting with, is information look-up - training an AI bot to be used for internal knowledge management which could, in turn, enable a new kind of targeted, contextualised performance support. This kind of 'copilot' is likely to become more accessible and widely used with the release of copilots from Microsoft, Google and other providers.

A lot of respondents also report personalising learning using adaptive learning pathways, where each person is served content based on their assessed level of knowledge, progress and relevance.

Supporting skill development

Skill development is a different flavour of personalisation. Developing a skill typically involves practice, feedback and reflection over a period of time. This usually involves:

- Practising the skill in the real world (e.g. engaging in difficult conversations) and getting 1:1 feedback.
- Role-playing exercises facilitated by in-person trainers; this has been difficult to scale to hundreds or even thousands of people across the organisation.
- Scenario learning in e-learning courses, which are more scalable but less realistic due to structured branching scenarios and pre-recorded feedback.

Generative AI could potentially overcome these limitations. A good number of learning professionals are already experimenting with AI to personalise the support people as they practise skills – with emphasis on receive experimentation, as most of these tools were at the pilot stage at best at the time of the survey:

- Coaching bots whose goal is to scale the 'leadership coaching' experience.
- Conversation simulators that enable people to practise various conversational skills using their natural language and benefitting from real-time, personalised feedback. The early use cases include difficult conversations, sales and customer support.

Some other uses of AI for skill development include a presenting coach (AI providing feedback on presentation skills), an interactive reflection tool, and a teaching assistant-style training aid for students.

AI for learning strategy

While it's talked about less than the previously mentioned use cases, in some organisations AI is also used to inform the learning strategy. Here are some examples of how people used generative AI:

- Gap analysis: asking AI to determine if there are any gaps in the learning and performance support provision at your organisation.
- Training requirements: asking AI to map job roles to training requirements to better understand what support your people need.
- Business alignment: asking AI for strategies to align the learning strategy to the business strategy.

On top of that, some respondents are tapping into AI-powered solutions for skills intelligence and internal mobility:

- **Skills intelligence:** identifying what skills are associated with certain roles, mapping the skills present in the organisation and adopting skill frameworks to help make strategic L&D decisions.
- **Internal mobility:** enabling upskilling and reskilling by matching people with potential job roles that would support their development, often using third party opportunity marketplaces.

AI for administrative support:

The scope of this paper isn't to outline all the possible uses of AI to support administrative tasks in learning, of which there are plenty. As a result, the list below is by no means complete or even prioritised. However, it will hopefully help you get a sense of how your colleagues in L&D are currently supporting their work.:

Operations support

- Writing reports, policies and procedures
- Summarising documents
- Writing emails
- Creating event agendas
- Writing feedback survey questions
- Writing role descriptions

Technical support

- Coding (incl. Github copilot)
- Excel help
- Running various analyses

Internal communication

- Writing blog posts, posts on internal platforms, and internal newsletters
- Writing course descriptions and otherwise describing learning initiatives internally
- Planning internal communications

"It's replaced Google as my 'How do I...' tool. As an example, I wanted to create a tool that generated random 'problem statements' with one click. I used ChatGPT to walk me through the process of creating this in Excel, including a back-and-forth dialogue to script a Macro."

"I use AI for summarizing documents and rewriting for different versions (e.g., rewrite this to 250 words for X purpose)."

Counterbalance

A different view of AI

The authors believe that AI is here to stay and that it will have a profound effect on the way we work, live and learn. Not everyone answering the survey, however, felt the same way. While these dissenting voices were in the minority, they certainly deserve to be heard, because they raise commonly held concerns about AI that need to be addressed, and touch on real issues that remain to be resolved.

Those raising concerns about the use of AI in L&D are sometimes portrayed as technophobic luddites. This binary thinking ignores people like the academic, who submitted some of the notes he makes available for staff and students which point out in detail how ChatGPT can be useful for students (eg to "inspire, rephrase, or proofread"), while also noting it was essential "students are aware of the benefits and limitations of AI in their area of study".

In answering the question 'Do you feel more or less positive about workplace L&D than you did at this time last year?' 11 out of 185 said they felt more negative. Here's how they responded to the final question, 'Is there anything that you would like to add?'. Some answers have been shortened, but are otherwise unedited:

"Very concerned about shiny object syndrome, and over-using without sufficient scrutiny. Overall, I worry about folks talking about sophisticated programming as AI (when it's not), IP issues with generative AI, and an overall lack of awareness of what AI is and can do."

"I fear that many senior leaders in companies see AI primarily as a way to produce learning materials faster, with less human input, which may actually make them worse. That's not the case where I'm working..."

"The potential is huge, but the poor/rushed implementation, due to the hype over one AI being able to produce language like a human, is just creating more problems than it is solving right now."

"Unfortunately AI is a good excuse and tool to replace human in critical position as L&D."

"Developers and technologists are becoming frustrated that the trainers cannot keep up with the pace of change."

"AI is the latest in a long line of #edtech solutions looking for a problem to solve."

"AI has its purpose but emphasis should be on how it can support improving performance rather than where we can make it fit."

There are real concerns about the use of AI in everyone's lives, and this includes its use in L&D. It would be wrong to mischaracterize these opinions as narrow minded. On the contrary there are subtle issues here which deserve to be treated carefully. We'll leave the final word to a respondent who felt neither more or less negative about L&D than this time last year, but reflects what many in the field feel. If these concerns are not addressed, we cannot expect AI to be widely or rapidly adopted:

"AI is exciting but with caveats: ethics, GDPR, misinformation and the potential for misuse, to name just a few."

Next steps

Where to start

Six months ago the common advice for L&D practitioners was to register on Open AI, experiment with ChatGPT, get comfortable with it and keep an eye on what's going on.

Now that many learning professionals have tried AI and ChatGPT in particular, they are asking different questions. How to overcome technology and regulatory barriers? How to navigate ethical concerns? How to start using AI strategically and create real business value? How to use it skillfully and keep up with its rapid development?

Unfortunately, it's still too early to learn from best practices from organisations that have figured it out - because to our knowledge, none have yet.

Instead, the best option is to take stock of where you are so you can decide where to go from there. We hope that the findings we outlined in this report will help you start these discussions in your organisation.

1. Understand where you are

- Do an audit of the systems and tools you already have in place.
- Map out your key processes.
- Understand the level of AI skills and knowledge in your team.
- Research and collate how your people are already using AI.
- Clarify AI use policies in your organisation.
- Consider which barriers you're already facing and which might come up in the future.

2. Identify your goals with AI

- Go over your team's KPIs and take note of your most persistent challenges.
- Prioritise the KPIs or key challenges that would add the highest value if solved and consider where AI might help.
- Go over your process maps and identify the tasks you can support with AI.
- Set up simple experiments with a goal and success criteria (e.g. 'Reduce time to course deployment by two weeks').

3. Find your own use cases for AI

- Get together with your team to consider which use cases from this report might apply in your own work.
- Discuss what tools are already proving useful for you, for what tasks, and who can teach others to use them.
- Investigate what other departments are doing and if you can either adapt some of their work, or collaborate on discovering new AI use cases.
- Address any knowledge, skill or mindset gaps to enable more people to participate in this AI discovery process. Take into account not just prompting, but also knowledge of your company's policies, understanding of AI limitations, or confidence building.
- Experiment with how AI can help reach your KPIs or address key challenges. Here are some ideas:
  - Run a workshop: gather a group of people, familiarise everyone with your processes, KPIs, and challenges, and discuss how you might use AI.
  - Run a challenge: agree on a pertinent 'How might we' problem, attempt to solve it individually and asynchronously, and come back together after a period of time to discuss the approaches and outcomes that emerged
  - Run a hackathon: get together people from different functions and dedicate a full day to ideate and prototype process automations with AI

> *"...you need to actually experience AI-based learning solutions to judge, through your lens as an L&D professional, whether they add any value. Do not rely on providers' marketing materials alone. Insist on getting access to a demo and trying it out yourself. That's the only way to discern the wheat from the chaff, the mere gimmicks from solutions that truly add value."*

Resources

Things to help you

Earlier in this paper we outlined the three questions that frequently recur:

- Beginning: where do I start?
- Exploiting: how do I make the most out of it?
- Maintaining: how do I keep up?

Feeling overwhelmed with information and rapid development of AI is a very common experience. Unfortunately, there is no single source that would comprehensively cover all aspects and updates of such a vast and swiftly evolving field.

That said, below you will find the approaches used by other respondents. We hope it will help you tailor your own strategy to keep on top of everything AI.

Foundational understanding

A lot of respondents sought out foundational understanding of AI to enable them to communicate about it and imagine possibilities. Some of the highly regarded courses include Generative AI courses on LinkedIn Learning and Microsoft's own catalogue, as well as Elements of AI and DeepLearning.AI.

> *"Understanding the components of these systems and what you can use them for, helps me communicate with my colleagues about what I need and it helps me understand what is possible."*

The reading list of books includes:

- Prediction Machines by Ajay Agrawal, Joshua Gans and Avi Goldfarb
- The Coming Wave by Mustafa Suleyman
- Artificial Intelligence for Learning by Donald Clark

Personalising content and learning journey

While organisations themselves are still too early to produce case studies with AI, many are turning to vendors for practical applications of AI in L&D. That includes:

- Connecting with vendors that are developing uses cases, ideally in your own organisation
- Asking for demos to see how various AI applications work (and if they work as advertised), to ask questions face-to-face and get first-hand information about any latest developments
- Attending vendor webinars where they showcase case studies with their early adopters who have results to share

Keeping up

Unsurprisingly, most respondents reported using a mix of podcasts, newsletters and following thought leaders on LinkedIn to curate the latest news for them.

We received too many names to list them all, with no clear leaders trusted by many L&D colleagues. However, the newsletters that came up more than once include:

- Ask. Learn. Share. by Mike Taylor
- Dr. Phil's Newsletter by Dr. Philippa Hardman
- Steal These Thoughts by Ross Stevenson
- One Useful Thing by Ethan Mollick

Interestingly, TikTok also made it to the list, with some people noting that there are numerous creators that share new AI tools and techniques.

Finally, Josh Bersin, McKinsey, Deloitte and Gartner also got a mention.

Other resources

Below you will find other, more specific articles, podcast episodes and videos brought up by your fellow L&D professionals:

- TED Talk by Sal Khan: "How AI Could Save (Not Destroy) Education"
- Resources at the Center for Humane Technology, including an interview with its founders on the "Your Undivided Attention" podcast, episode "The AI Dilemma"
- Various resources are available from the Open Data Institute
- Data Ethics by the Alan Turing Institute
- The Thinking Effect: a repository of AI tools for L&D
- "How to Learn AI From Scratch in 2023" by Datacamp

About the authors

Background on Donald and Egle

Donald H Taylor

Donald has chaired the Learning Technologies Conference in London since 2000 and writes and speaks world-wide about Learning and Development. His annual L&D Global Sentiment Survey, started in 2014, provides a unique perspective on L&D trends from some 4,000 people in over 100 countries. From 2010 to 2021, he chaired the Learning and Performance Institute.

He chairs the Workforce Development board for VC firm Emerge Education, and advises several EdTech start-ups.

The author of Learning Technologies in the Workplace, Donald is a graduate of Oxford University and the recipient of an honorary doctorate from London's Middlesex University.

Follow on LinkedIn

Egle Vinauskaite

As an award-winning director of the learning innovation consultancy Nodes, Egle Vinauskaite's deep expertise in learning, behavioural science, and technology has made her a sought-after advisor by top edtech startups and blue-chip companies. With her work spanning AI, XR, mobile, platforms, blended learning programmes, and so much more, she understands the ground zero of how AI is ushering in entirely new ways of doing things in the world of learning and edtech.

Egle has a degree in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University and is the Rising Star Award winner at the Learning and Performance Institute's Learning Awards.

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For more on this research, go to:
www.donaldhtaylor.co.uk/the-research-base/

When citing this report, please refer to The L&D GSS Focus Report 01.

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