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Special Report

Unboxing Skill Agility®



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UNBOXING SKILL AGILITY®

Today's learning landscape is undergoing a substantial evolution in not only the way people operate at work but what's needed of the work itself. Businesses and jobs are deemphasizing titles and requiring new unique skillsets, as rapid advancements due to automation and artificial intelligence (AI) threaten to render obsolete a vast majority of technical roles and amplify the importance of human-centered competencies.

“In the past 10 years, there's been a massive shift of what the L&D function was supposed to do. Previously, the business has driven what learning strategies should be. L&D supported products, processes, system trainings and leadership – pushing content one way and bringing training in at the end for the good of the company. Today, learning is helping to drive business strategy, as a lever to business goals. It's turned L&D on its head and made for more exciting, holistic conversations with employees at the core.”

ROSE SHELDON
SVP AND CLO AT KEYBANK
CLN ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



With a higher value on learning, application and skill building than ever before, these changes have unequivocally reminded leaders that the only constant is the call for continuous learning, adaptability and productivity. But how are L&D leaders building a future-ready workforce and bringing measurable value to the business?

This report has the answers.

THE POWER OF SKILL AGILITY®

A [2021 LinkedIn report](#) revealed that its members' skills for the same occupation changed by 25% from 2015 to 2021, and predicted that by 2025, those skills would likely change by 40%.

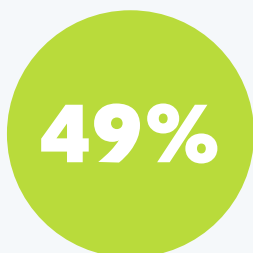
Another [panel of experts](#) estimated that up to 85% of the jobs that today's college students will hold by 2030 haven't even been invented yet.



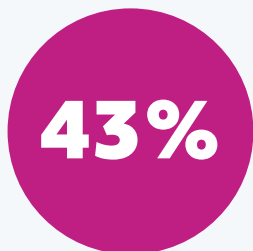
In light of this, we recently asked the CLN community:

“What is your highest skill-building priority over the next 2-3 years?”

TOP 3 RESPONSES INCLUDED:



Upskilling current employees to fill skill gaps



Identifying new skills that will be needed as the business evolves



Upskilling current employees to fill skill gaps

"We need to increase the speed in which to ready new industry professionals - rapid growth in the industry has been challenging."

CLN SURVEY RESPONDANT



These examples highlight the importance of learning under uncertainty and building adaptability skills as it's becoming increasingly significant for businesses to take on the ambiguous future. But there's been very little understanding of what cognitive capacities underlie adaptive behaviors or how to assess them and train this type of thinking. With so much change, organizations must adopt new practices to adapt effectively to evolving business needs. This means identifying, anticipating, acquiring and sharing skills in an agile manner.

“We call this Skill Agility®.

Skill Agility® is the ability to respond to business challenges and develop skills at the pace of change. This starts with everyone’s ability to learn, but it truly comes to life when it becomes a reality at the company level.

The good news is that Skill Agility® can be cultivated and improved because it is itself a skill – a learned power to do something well: in this case, to observe, learn, innovate, reflect and adapt.

To achieve Skill Agility® at scale and become adept at rapid change, companies must adopt the right technology, structure and mindset at all levels”

LACY THOMPSON
CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER
UNBOXED TRAINING & TECHNOLOGY



HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY FOR SKILL AGILITY®

While the true intrinsic and extrinsic onus of skill agility® resides within the individual, to remain competitive in the rapidly changing marketplace, individuals must work together organization-wide to foster a continuous learning culture at scale.

To get started, you need to think big picture and assess the health and resilience of your company's overall learning ecosystem. Consider the following questions in these five key areas:

LEARNING STRATEGY

Is your learning strategy well-defined, understood and championed by all levels? How are skill gaps and upskilling or reskilling needs currently identified and tied to the business' objectives now and into the future?

LEARNING CULTURE

What are the behaviors, attitudes and norms that encompass how learning is viewed? Do leaders operationally allow time for, encourage and reward learning? Do employees truly feel psychologically safe to experiment and make mistakes?



LEARNING OFFERING

Does your organization provide a variety of modalities to accommodate unique learner preferences, provide guidance and measure applied proficiencies?

LEARNING SUPPORT

What role do peers, internal experts, coaches, managers and AI play in sharing information and offering effective feedback for improvement?

LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

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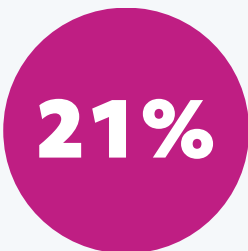
In a recent survey, we asked the L&D community:

“When you consider the current learning ecosystem at your organization, in which area do you have the most room to grow?”

TOP 3 RESPONSES INCLUDED:



Learning culture



Learning strategy



Learning technology

All three areas are learning enablers that will drive the learning that is happening and will impact how learning FLOWS across the organization.



“I visualize our learning ecosystem as a pyramid – layers of integrated relationships that determine how learning is created, consumed and applied. Foundationally, you must have a strong team with a structured workflow that (at the next level) is powered by smart, enabling technology that is continuously refined by data. Then you have knowledge management - meeting employees in the flow of work (with the help of AI) but having the functionality to allow them to pursue learning curiously too.

We’re still working on creating the hands-on experiential moments where they can take the book knowledge and have somewhere to practice. Finally, at the top is a culture of continuous learning.

If employees can look at that pyramid and know that our business is supporting them with all the tools they need when they need them, it helps with retention, employee engagement and happiness. It makes it more enjoyable to do their jobs as they become better equipped, more confident and have the skills required for whatever comes next.”

ROSE SHELDON
SVP AND CLO AT KEYBANK
CLN ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER



MEASURING SKILL AGILITY® FOR IMPACT

More often than not, companies equate success with technical expertise – an employee performed their job responsibilities or completed a certain task, which is relatively easier to quantify.

And yet there is much room for growth in leveraging and analyzing data for better employee outcomes. Non-technical “soft” skills like communication, critical thinking, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence and problem-solving have previously been more intangible to measure yet are proving vital for professional development and success.

“Organizations must move toward a more holistic approach to measurement that reveals insights into ongoing learning, skill building and on-the-job performance over time, propelled by iterative coaching and feedback.

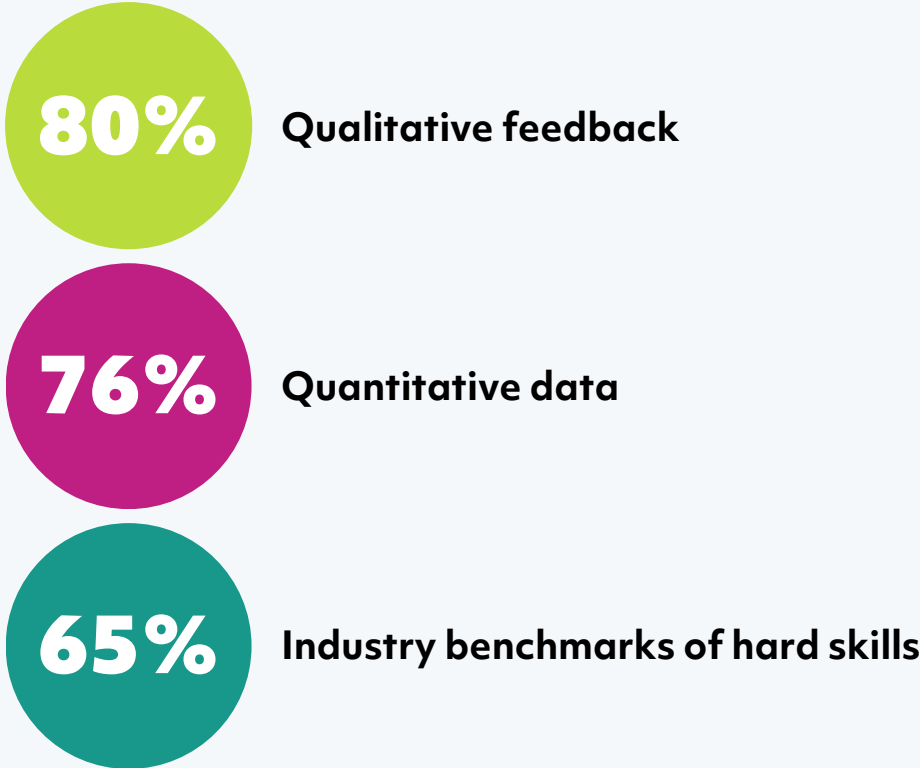
L&D leaders often focus on one thing – getting content out quickly, but what’s the learning strategy driving it, and how do you know it has successfully impacted the business? Viewing it from a higher perspective allows L&D to drive successful behavior change inside the organization. The key is creating AI-powered internal talent marketplaces to match skills and business needs, deploy an integrated learning ecosystem and foster a culture of continuous learning.”

LACY THOMPSON
CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER
UNBOXED TRAINING & TECHNOLOGY



To understand how L&D is measuring its skill-building strategies, we asked: **“How do you currently assess the health and maturity of learning & development capabilities at your company?”**

TOP 3 RESPONSES INCLUDED:



"We measure skill agility and change by collecting KPIs relative to the number of individuals with development plans and how frequently they are updated and maintained. Our strategy forward is to take it to the next level of validation with coaching tools that show evidence that the skills are being applied back on the job, via managers' observation and skills assessments."

BILL KENNELLY, MS. ED.
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
M&T BANK



EMBRACE THE FUTURE OF WORK WITH SKILL AGILITY®

Though no one can predict exactly what skills will be needed for the future, one thing is clear: success, for individuals, teams and organizations in the new world of work requires carefully cultivated skill agility®.

It's proving to be essential for career advancement, personal growth and business flexibility and resiliency in today's ever-changing marketplace.

When employees are upskilled and/or reskilled, they can contribute more to the company, equaling increased engagement, productivity and retention - separating high-performance work cultures ready to take on the complexities of modern economies.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Christine Sokolowski was the Senior Editorial Director and Lead Analyst at Corporate Learning Network. In her role, Christine led all learning, training, education, and employee engagement research initiatives for CLN.

CLN's articles, special reports, commentaries, infographics, executive interviews, webinars, and online events reach a community of over 100,000+.

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