

RESEARCH REPORT

Top L&D Priority For 2018: **HIGHER LEARNER ENGAGEMENT & IMPROVED PERFORMANCE FROM TRAINING**

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Definitions



eLEARNING – Training courses delivered online, on-demand via the internet. Sometimes called Web-Based Training (WBT).

SELF-PACED LEARNING – A “teach-yourself” method of eLearning that is initiated and directed by the learner, rather than led by an instructor. Self-paced learning is typically constructed in such a way that the learner proceeds from one topic or segment to the next at their own speed.

BLENDED LEARNING – Training provided by combining different modalities, such as interactive eLearning, video demonstrations, and live instructor-led training (ILT)— both in the classroom and virtually online. The goal of blended learning is to maximize the training benefits of each modality.

Introduction

Emerging professional education models give organizations new ways to engage employees, track development initiatives, and create a culture of continuous improvement. However, ***achieving these gains begins by moving past isolated self-paced learning models to embrace blended learning.*** Learning Tree is leading an industry-wide push toward blended learning methodologies, laying the groundwork for sustainable improvements in employee training initiatives.

The rise of eLearning establishes a basis for this move toward blended learning, and momentum is strong in the sector. A Technavio study found that eLearning revenues are poised to hit \$31 billion by 2020's conclusion. As more organizations engage in eLearning, they find themselves needing to create an ecosystem to support these new training delivery methods.

Blended learning strengthens the weak points in self-paced learning programs, empowering organizations to maximize value potential. To understand this potential fully, let's explore the current state of the training sector. We recently surveyed more than 220 high title professionals involved in learning and development decisions. Respondents were spread across the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom.

The Current Self-Paced Learning Landscape

Our survey indicates that organizations have embraced self-paced learning, but simply moving to a user-led approach to training **doesn't guarantee success**.

The Prevalence of Self-Paced Learning

Just 18.9 percent of respondents said they don't offer any self-paced learning.

Self-Paced Learning Doesn't Address All Training Challenges

When grouped by the training methods offered, the respondents from organizations that don't offer self-paced learning were the only group to not experience budget declines. Most of those budgets are on hold. Conversely, organizations using recordings of training for self-paced learning were the most likely to have experienced reduced budgets.

The Popularity of Self-Paced Learning Subscriptions

A professional development subscription service will typically feature cultivated content streams incorporating multimedia, video, quizzes, and similar materials that workers take in at their convenience. These solutions are popular, as our study found more than 60 percent of organizations use them. Furthermore, the Technavio study mentioned earlier also pointed to these types of eLearning course libraries as popular options.

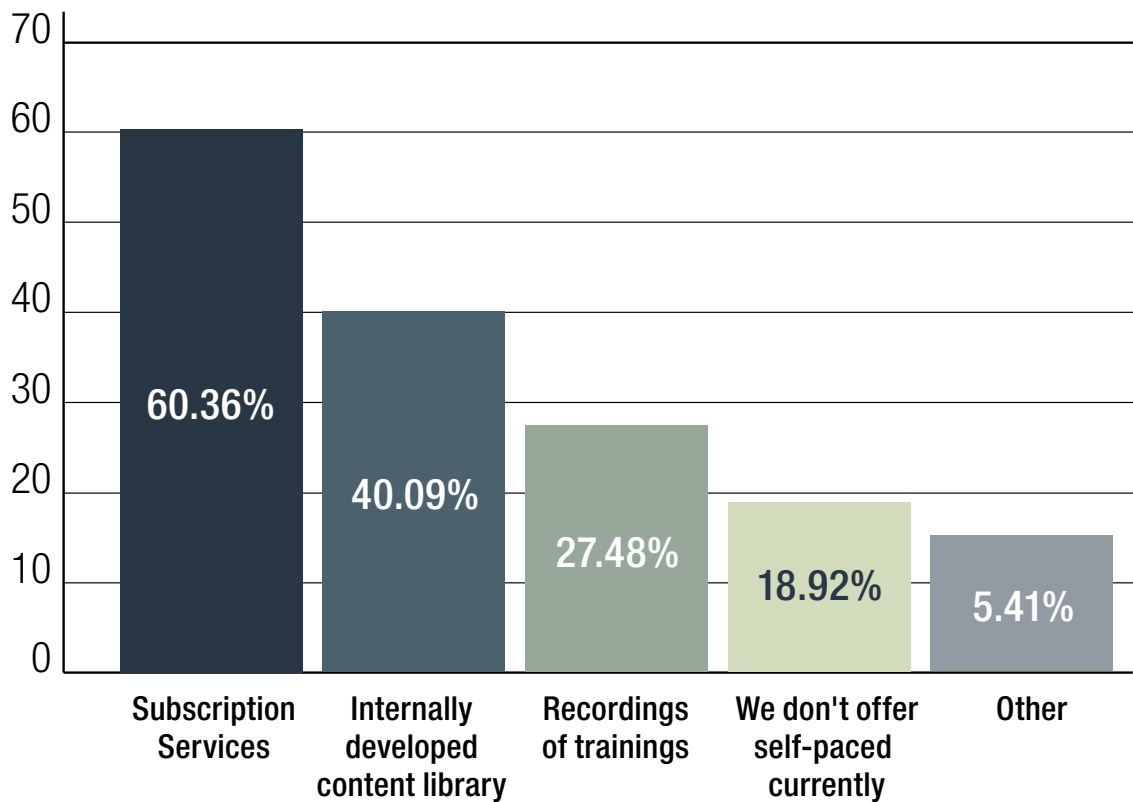
Subscription services offer considerable potential:
The group with the highest likelihood for *increased budgets* was *organizations offering subscription services*.

If organizations want to engage in self-paced learning, there's a strong possibility that a content subscription will be involved.

FIGURE 1

PREVALENCE OF SELF-PACED LEARNING METHODS

SURVEY QUESTION: As you look at ways to maximize training ROI, do you offer self-paced learning libraries to your workforce?



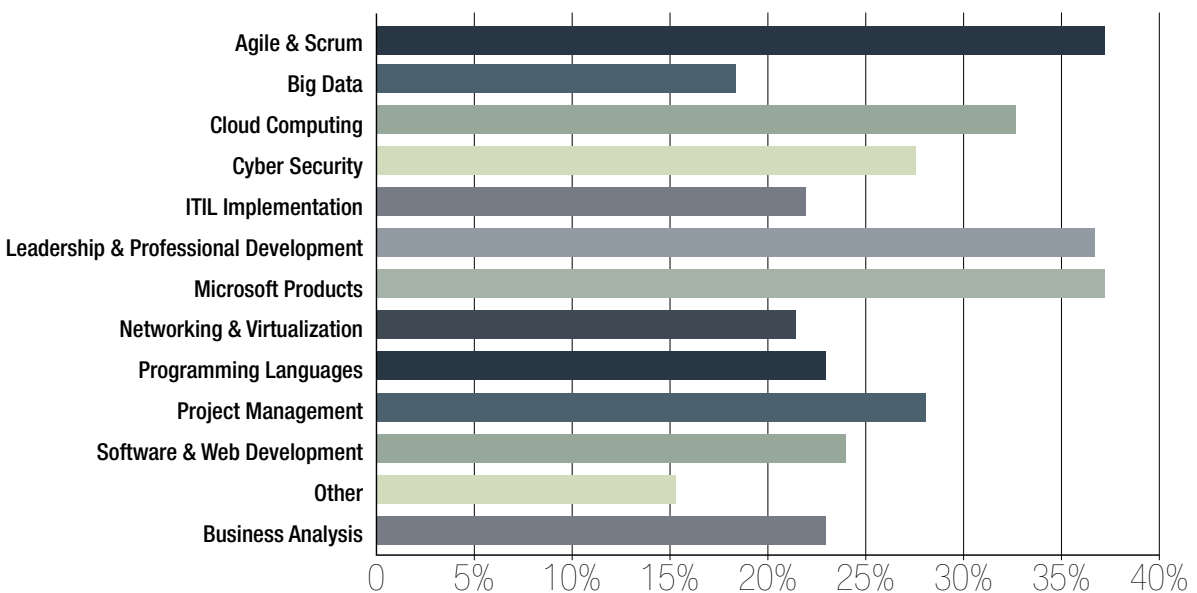
Gaps Exist in a Variety of Areas

Self-paced learning doesn't necessarily cover every topic well. We asked respondents which topic areas aren't covered well by self-paced learning. The results of this question can be found in *FIGURE 2*.

FIGURE 2

GETTING MORE OUT OF SELF-PACED LEARNING LIBRARIES

SURVEY QUESTION: Which topic areas are most important to you that may not be easily addressed by your self-paced content?



We found that:

- **Microsoft products, along with leadership and development training,** represented the largest topics of concern, with more than 35 percent saying self-paced learning isn't well addressed in those areas.
- **Cloud computing, as well as Agile and Scrum,** were recognized as problematic by more than 30 percent of respondents.
- **Project management and cyber security** self-paced learning is also limited, as the topics were identified as being difficult to address with self-paced learning by more than 25 percent of those polled.

The Efficacy of Self-Paced Learning

Self-paced learning isn't a cure-all, and research coming out of academia, a sector rapidly embracing self-paced methodologies, backs up this claim.

Research published by the American Physical Society, a physics education industry journal, found that students asked to study electronic tutorials alongside course material ***performed notably worse*** than those who accompanied class time with one-on-one sessions with tutors.

Additionally, issues such as motivation, self-regulation, and time management were all brought up as potential challenges to the effectiveness of self-paced learning.

This isn't to say that self-paced learning doesn't have a place in an organization's training curriculum — only that it shouldn't be relied upon as the sole method of training implemented.

Organizations are best served through a blended learning approach to employee education, which combines the ease and accessibility of self-paced learning methods with the structure and reinforcement of live training methods (classroom training, virtual training, embedded coaching, etc.).

Organizations that want to step forward into blended learning methods may want to first look at how they develop and evaluate their training spending.

Addressing Learning & Development Budget Challenges

Research conducted by the Brandon Hall Group and published in Training Magazine found that enterprise spending budgets can vary widely from one organization to the next.

Large organizations will spend an average of \$13 million annually on training, but that figure falls to \$3.7 million for mid-sized organizations and just \$290,000 for smaller organizations.

The study indicated that, in most cases, organizational leaders, such as CEOs, directors and individuals in similar roles, tend to have the most responsibility over learning budgets, even in organizations with heads of learning or chief learning officers.

Prevalence of Training Methods

In terms of actual learning methods, classroom sessions are still dominant, as those polled by the Brandon Hall Group found these are used 22 percent more often than alternatives.

However, many organizations are using self-paced learning alongside blended strategies to engage their workforces.

As organizations gain new technologies and capabilities to train their workers, they have a vital opportunity to blend different types of learning experiences to optimize their resources and create a sustainable, valuable culture of skills growth.

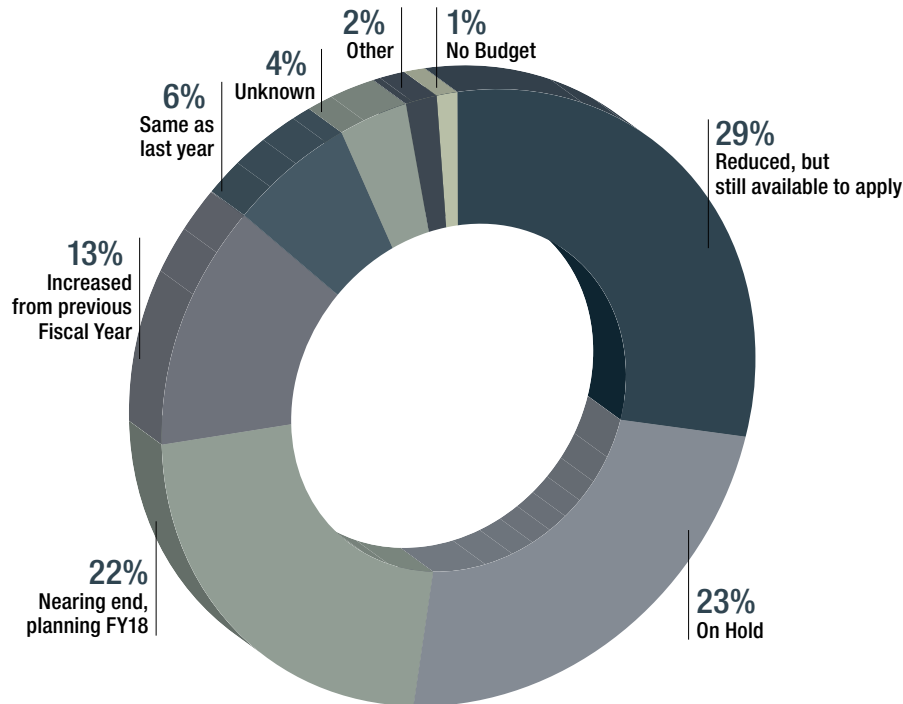
The Issue of Budget Uncertainty

The aforementioned research from Brandon Hall Group was published in 2016. Our findings, presented *FIGURE 3*, show how the industry has shifted and changed in the past year.

FIGURE 3

STATUS OF ORGANIZATIONAL L&D BUDGETS

SURVEY QUESTION: Is your current Learning & Development budget...



We found that training budgets are often shrinking or nonexistent. Approximately 29 percent of the respondents to our study said their learning and development budgets are declining, but that they are also able to apply for funding. Another 28 percent of those polled said their budget is either on hold, unknown, or not present at all. Just 13 percent of respondents are experiencing learning and development budget growth.

These results point to a great deal of uncertainty around who is responsible for training spending.

Maximizing Efficacy of Training in the Face of Budget Uncertainty

Our experience as a professional training leader has taught us that **organizations that are willing to invest strategically in employees tend to get the best results**, and the piecemeal nature of spending and strategic development in the learning sector could be partially responsible for the budget challenges facing organizations.

Blended learning methods can resolve these issues by creating a clear, strategic professional development pathway that captures everything from deciding on the right materials for your users to evaluating how well individuals are gaining skills. Purposeful spending is critical, making formalized budgeting processes essential.

Using Blended Learning to Optimize Training Efforts

At Learning Tree, we advocate for a method of blended learning that takes a holistic approach organizational training to maximize absorption of knowledge and achieve optimal results back on the job. A blended learning experience incorporates:

- Building foundational knowledge
- Providing instructor-led training
- Offering hands-on exercises
- Implementing activation training
- Using mentorship and coaching

Blended Learning Success in Practice

We deliver this solution through our Workforce Optimization strategy, and it has already found success. In partnership with a major healthcare provider, we developed a training program specifically aimed to complement, support, and reinforce skills gained from self-paced learning modules. This was achieved through a combination of virtual workshops, an embedded virtual coach, and targeted assignments. [Click Here to View Case Study](#)

This project exemplifies our Workforce Optimization program, which includes:

- Defining the strategic case behind training initiatives.
- Identifying the competencies that should be associated with specific job roles.
- Designing custom training pathways in line with primary goals.
- Incorporating blended learning strategies into the larger training paradigm.
- Sustaining momentum and success by measuring adoption and performance.

Maximizing Training Efforts Through a Holistic Blended Learning Approach

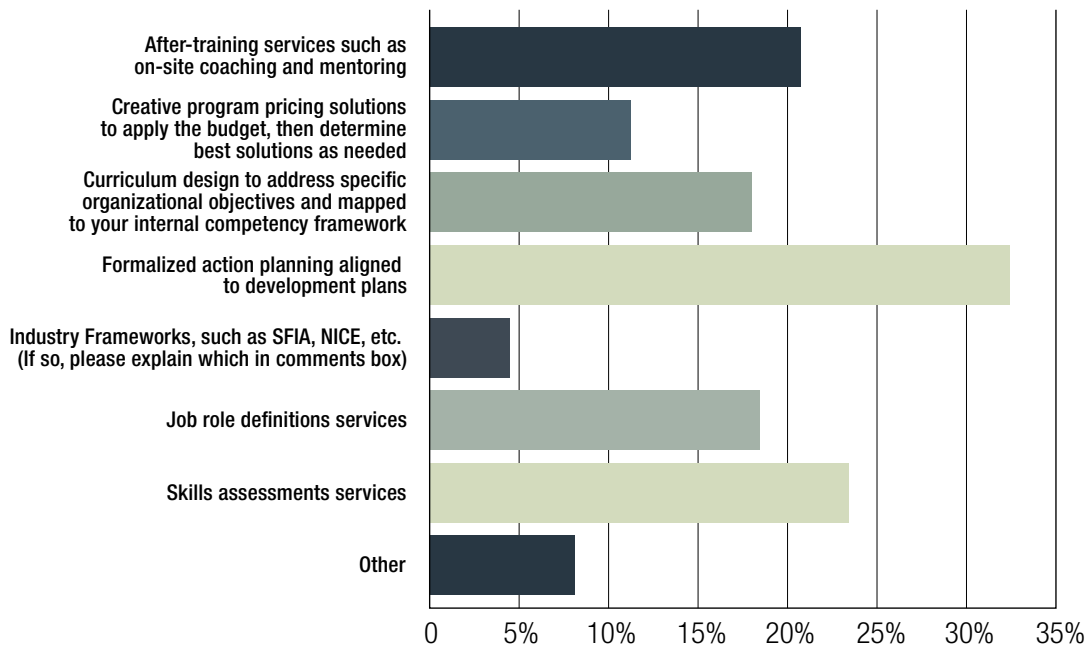
Blended learning is occurring everywhere within our communities – in school, in athletics, and in public and private sector organizations. However, organizations are in the early stages of responding – and many, according to our findings, are missing pieces critical to the success of any blended learning initiative.

Approximately 18 percent of respondents to our study said they don't have or use solutions to help them assess and realize training performance. Fewer than 30 percent of companies have a formalized action plan to accompany their development strategies. Furthermore, only 20 percent use skills assessment services and after-training services. These core elements of a blended learning strategy are increasingly critical, and Learning Tree can help as organizations work to employ such tactics.

FIGURE 4

USAGE OF VARIOUS L&D SOLUTIONS

SURVEY QUESTION: Do you currently utilize additional L&D solutions to help realize performance (or behavior) changes such as...



Organizations have an opportunity to capitalize on self-paced learning while maximizing value through blended learning strategies. While progress is happening in the sector, more organizational cohesion is needed to advance these initiatives. If your organization is considering such as strategy, contact Learning Tree and we can tell you more about our [Workforce Optimization blended solutions platform](#).

Appendix

Methodology: Learning Tree emailed a survey three times in 2017 on June 22, July 6, and July 19 to a random sample. 222 took the survey from a wide range of industries across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

FIGURE 1

QUESTION: As you look at ways to maximize training ROI, do you offer self-paced learning libraries to your workforce?

RESPONSE	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS RESPONSE
Subscription services (Lynda, Pluralsight, Softskills etc.)	122	60.36%
Your own internally developed content library	86	40.09%
Recordings of trainings	60	27.48%
We don't offer self-paced currently	41	18.92%
Other	29	5.41%
Grand Total	338	

Respondents were asked to choose all that applied

FIGURE 2

QUESTION: If you answered yes, which topic areas are most important to you that may not be easily addressed by your self-paced content?

RESPONSE	TOTAL TIMES A RESPONDENT CHOSE THIS TOPIC	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS TOPIC AREA
Agile & Scrum	64	37.24%
Big Data	36	18.37%
Cloud Computing	64	32.65%
Cyber Security	53	27.55%
ITIL Implementation	43	21.94%
Leadership & Professional Development	72	36.73%
Microsoft Products (Azure, Windows Server, Windows 10, SharePoint, SQL, etc.)	73	37.24%
Networking & Virtualization	42	21.43%
Programming Languages (Java, Python, Apple, etc.)	45	22.96%
Project Management (any methodology - PMI, Agile, PRINCE2, etc.)	55	28.06%
Software & Web Development (including Quality & Testing)	47	23.98%
Other	96	15.31%
Business Analysis	45	22.96%
Grand Total	961	

Among respondents who answered "Yes" to question 2a. Respondents were asked to choose the most important topics and could choose multiple options. Percentages are based on 196 respondents.

FIGURE 3

QUESTION: Is your current Learning & Development budget ...

RESPONSE	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENT
Reduced, but still available to apply	65	29.28%
On Hold	52	23.42%
Nearing end, planning FY18	49	22.07%
Increased from previous Fiscal Year	28	12.61%
Same as last year	14	6.31%
Unknown	8	3.60%
No budget	2	0.90%
Other	4	1.80%
Grand Total	222	100.00%

Respondents were asked to choose the answer that best applied. Among those who answered “Other,” we broke out the following specific answers: “Same as last year,” “Unknown” and “No budget.”

FIGURE 4

QUESTION: Do you utilize additional L&D solutions to help realize performance (or behavior) changes such as ...

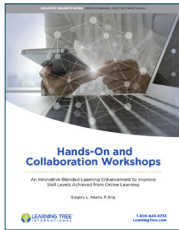
RESPONSE	NUMBER OF TIMES A RESPONDENT CHOSE THIS OPTION	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS WHO CHOSE THIS OPTION
After-training services such as on-site coaching and mentoring	46	20.72%
Creative program pricing solutions to apply the budget, then determine best solutions as needed	25	11.26%
Curriculum Design to address specific organizational objectives and mapped to your internal competency framework	40	18.02%
Formalized action planning aligned to development plans	72	32.43%
Industry Frameworks, such as SFIA, NICE, etc. (If so, please explain which in comments box)	10	4.50%
Job Role Definitions Services	41	18.47%
Skills Assessments Services	52	23.42%
Other	58	8.11%
Grand Total	344	

Respondents could choose multiple options.

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Related Blended Learning Resources



INDUSTRY INSIGHTS PAPER

Hands-On and Collaboration Workshops:
An Innovative Blended Learning Enhancement to Improve
Skill Levels Achieved from Online Learning

[Click Here to View Industry Insights Paper](#)

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