2024 Learning Trends:

How Learning, Skills, and Talent Development Create a Future-Ready Workforce

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Executive Summary

There's an old proverb that essentially states "the shoemaker's children have no shoes." Although handmade shoes are mostly a lost art, the metaphor still has a profound message. Where we have expertise, we often use that expertise for the benefit of others, even if it means we go without the benefit of that expertise.

That's true today in the context of learning. Many talent development professionals in the research say that their company invests in them, but many don't. **Only 31% of learning leaders strongly believe that their company prioritizes skill development and growth for their internal learning, talent, and HR teams.**

We as a community of talent development leaders can't afford to let this slide, because the future of the workforce and the adaptability of the business hinge on the strategies, competencies, and insights provided by this group within the business.

In today's rapidly evolving business environment, the acceleration of change driven by AI and other technologies is reshaping the workplace. While this disruption presents challenges, it also offers opportunities for growth, with employees viewing learning as a critical pathway to navigate these shifts. However, organizations are struggling to align learning strategies with business objectives, creating a workforce readiness gap that impacts agility, performance, and retention.

Data from the **2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study** of more than 1,100 global employers and 1,000 global learners shows organizational leaders a clear path to success when it comes to employee development and how it intersects with business agility and performance.

This research was supported by leaders in the learning, talent development, and workforce performance space are making a positive difference in the industry.

- *Cornerstone OnDemand – Leading Partner*

- *HiBob – Leading Partner*

- *Glider AI – Supporting Partner*

- *Betterworks – Supporting Partner*

- *Atana – Supporting Partner*

For more information about how we partner with research supporters, please see our Statement of Ethics on the "About the Study" page later in this report.

In addition, we'd like to thank our Learning Advisory Board for their input. These enterprise talent and learning leaders influence the questions we ask in our research and we are grateful for their time and expertise. We have included quotes from some of those leaders within this report to contextualize the research findings with a practical perspective.

This report explores three essential themes in modern talent development:

1. Adapting to Disruption through Learning

Employees recognize that learning is vital for staying relevant amidst the accelerating pace of change. A significant proportion of employers, however, report a lack of skills clarity and preparedness within their workforce, which leads to unrealized potential and reduced adaptability. The research shows that 63% of employers feel their workforce is not adaptable to change, and only 16% of employees believe their skills are genuinely developed for future success. This disconnect underscores the need for organizations to prioritize learning as a strategic tool to overcome disruption and foster workforce agility.

2. Holistic Skill Strategies Across the Enterprise

Effective skill strategies must include three perspectives:

- An executive perspective, offering strategic insights and alignment with broader business goals.

- An employee perspective, ensuring that skill development is practical, relevant, and aligns with career paths.

- A strategic learning function perspective, guiding and supporting skill growth across the organization.

Organizations that integrate these perspectives into their learning programs are more likely to achieve high adaptability and productivity. Employers with a high confidence in their ability to develop employee skills are nearly twice as likely to say their workforce is highly adaptable to change.

3. Learning as a Driver of Risk Mitigation and Performance

Learning continues to be one of the most effective tools for mitigating business risks, enhancing employee competence, boosting belonging, driving retention, and improving performance. Research indicates that employees who receive effective training are significantly more adaptable to change (86% more likely) and less likely to leave the organization (five times more likely to stay). Furthermore, companies that establish a culture of learning report a 44% higher likelihood of increased revenue and improved workforce retention.

Ultimately, organizations that commit to continuous, strategic learning are better positioned to thrive in a fast-moving, disruptive environment, turning potential risks into opportunities for growth and sustained business success.

While it's a complex problem, the reality is that learning is a high-leverage activity to drive real results and impact on business agility and performance. Let's dive in.
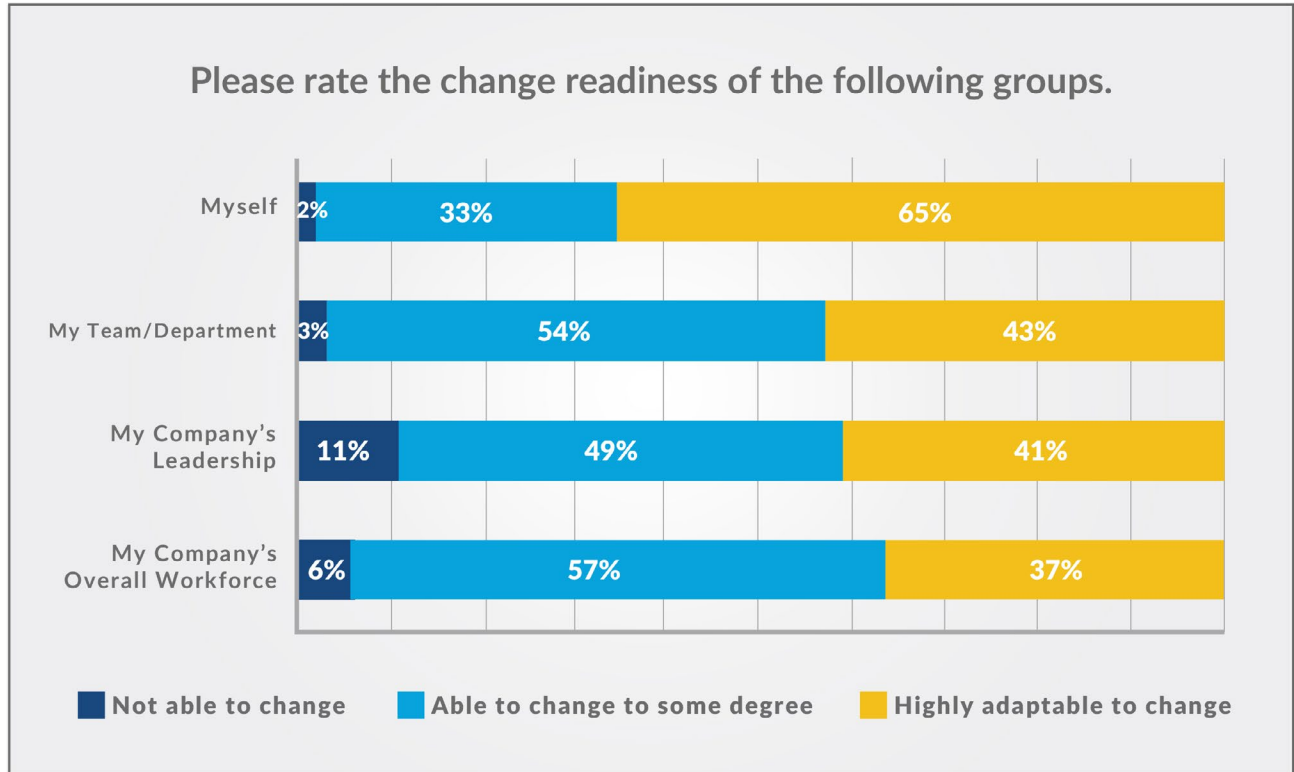
Section 1: Adapting to Disruption Through Learning and Skill Growth

The modern workplace is evolving faster than ever, largely driven by rapid advancements in AI and other technologies. This accelerated pace of change presents both challenges and opportunities for businesses. Employees face uncertainty around skill obsolescence and shifting job requirements, yet they increasingly view learning as a means to enhance their adaptability and resilience. Organizations that prioritize strategic skill growth are better equipped to turn disruption into an advantage, generating a more agile workforce that thrives in dynamic environments.

The Workforce Readiness Gap

Despite the clear need for adaptation, many organizations struggle to align learning initiatives with broader business goals. The research on learners shows that only 16% of employees feel their skills are being developed with future needs in mind, indicating a significant disconnect between current learning strategies and business realities. Moreover, 63% of business leaders acknowledge that their workforce lacks the adaptability required to keep pace with rapid change, which creates tangible risks to productivity, competitiveness, and long-term success.

Figure 1: Change Readiness Varies Across the Organization

Please rate the change readiness of the following groups.

Group	Not able to change	Able to change to some degree	Highly adaptable to change
Myself	2%	33%	65%
My Team/Department	3%	54%	43%
My Company's Leadership	11%	49%	41%
My Company's Overall Workforce	6%	57%	37%

■ Not able to change   ■ Able to change to some degree   ■ Highly adaptable to change

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)

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The readiness gap is compounded by the fact that employees increasingly view skill development as an antidote to disruption. In fact, 70% of employees see learning as critical to mitigating the effects of AI and other technological advancements. However, many training programs remain focused on compliance or immediate job requirements rather than equipping employees with future-ready skills. This misalignment can weaken workforce agility, stifle innovation, and slow responses to emerging trends.

Learning as a Strategic Response to Change

Learning serves as one of the most powerful tools for overcoming the challenges posed by rapid technological advancements. Organizations with effective learning strategies are better positioned to navigate changes, maintain operational continuity, and achieve business objectives. **Workers who receive adequate training are 86% more likely to describe themselves as adaptable.** This highlights the necessity of training that goes beyond basic compliance; it must foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and technological proficiency, all of which are vital for responding to disruptive forces.
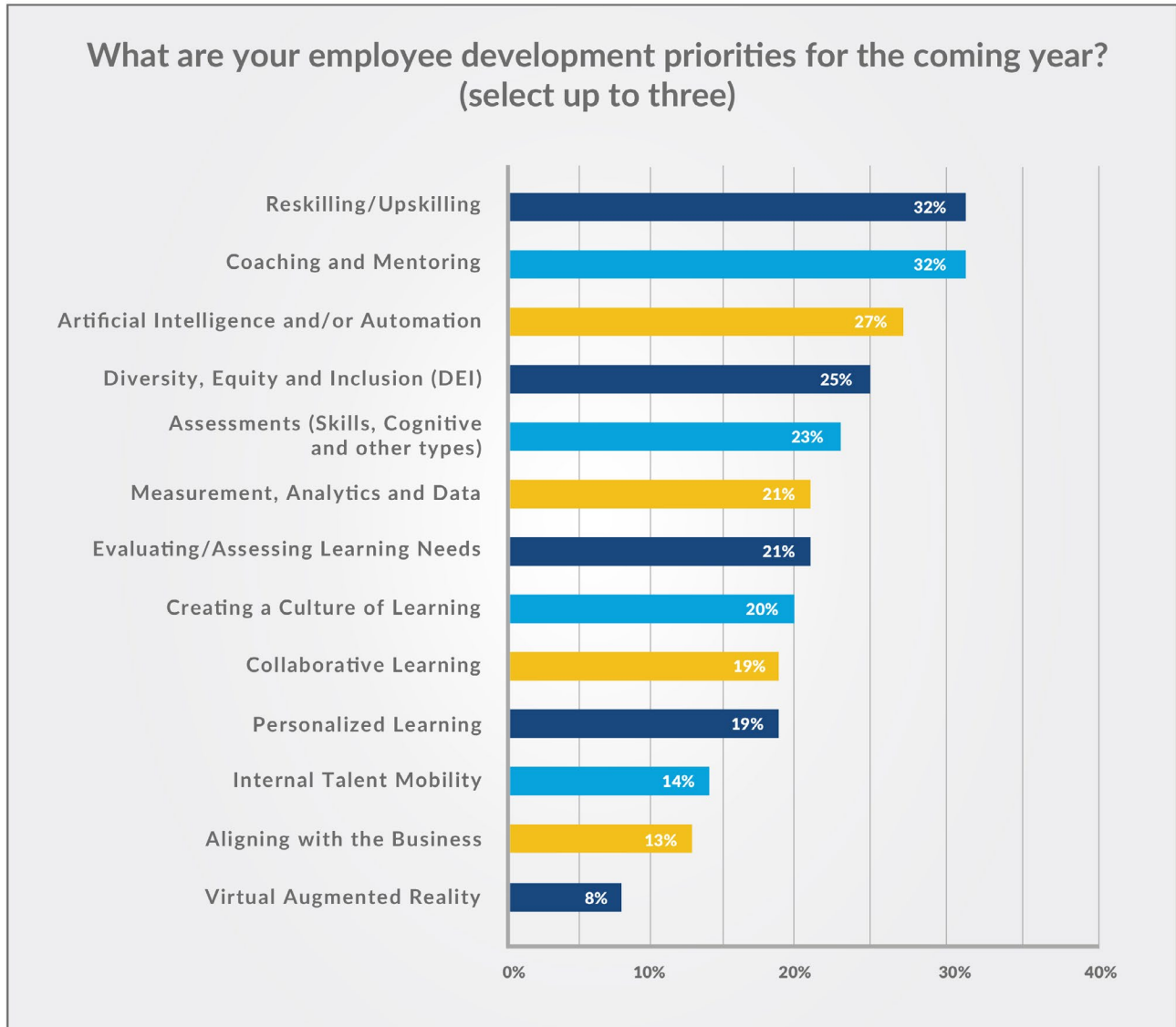
To enhance workforce adaptability, organizations must focus on the following aspects.

Skill assessments and analytics: Effective use of skill assessments helps identify both current capabilities and future skill gaps, enabling tailored training interventions. AI-powered analytics can offer real-time insights into employee development needs and preferences, making learning more targeted and efficient.

Personalized learning paths: Tailored learning experiences that reflect individual career goals can boost engagement and skill retention. According to the research, when employees perceive unfair treatment regarding their access to training opportunities, they are nearly three times more likely to say they lack autonomy to build their preferred career path. Integrating AI-driven platforms can further personalize learning by recommending courses, resources, and activities that match each employee's specific skill needs.

Embedding learning into daily workflows: Employees are more likely to engage with learning when it is integrated into their everyday tasks. For instance, microlearning modules or AI-driven on-demand training can deliver just-in-time learning that supports real-time problem-solving and performance improvement. This approach is essential for creating a culture where learning is viewed as a continuous process, not an occasional activity.

Figure 2: Employer Learning Priorities in 2024/2025

What are your employee development priorities for the coming year? (select up to three)

Priority	Percentage
Reskilling/Upskilling	32%
Coaching and Mentoring	32%
Artificial Intelligence and/or Automation	27%
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)	25%
Assessments (Skills, Cognitive and other types)	23%
Measurement, Analytics and Data	21%
Evaluating/Assessing Learning Needs	21%
Creating a Culture of Learning	20%
Collaborative Learning	19%
Personalized Learning	19%
Internal Talent Mobility	14%
Aligning with the Business	13%
Virtual Augmented Reality	8%

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)

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Closing the Readiness Gap: Strategies for Success

Closing the workforce readiness gap requires a skills-first approach that aligns training with strategic objectives. Organizations must take a proactive stance by integrating learning directly into strategic planning and daily operations.

Creating a culture of learning: It is crucial to foster a culture that encourages employees to seek development opportunities. Visible support from leadership is key—executives must champion learning as a strategic priority. As Terri Lewis, Chief People Officer at OneCall, noted in a recent Lighthouse learning livestream in front of over 1,000 HR and learning leaders in attendance, "It's about aligning training with individual goals and career paths, making it clear that skill development is not just a checkbox, but a pathway to growth." Lewis emphasized the need to connect training to real business needs and career aspirations to drive engagement and adoption.

Offering diverse training formats: Employees have different learning preferences, making it essential to offer a range of training options, including in-person workshops, virtual training, microlearning, and experiential learning. **Evidence suggests that nearly all employees prefer a blend of learning formats, not just a single option, as it allows them to access training in ways that suit their personal styles and work demands.**

Ensuring equitable access to training: According to the research, 47% of employees feel that growth opportunities are not fairly distributed across the organization, which can lead to disengagement and increased turnover. Companies must ensure that learning resources are accessible to all employees, regardless of role, tenure, or location. By democratizing access to training, organizations can foster a more inclusive and engaged workforce.

Building Resilience Through Learning

Building a resilient workforce requires more than ad-hoc training efforts; it demands an integrated learning strategy that empowers employees to grow their skills and adapt to evolving business needs. Organizations that prioritize dynamic, personalized learning will be better positioned to thrive amid disruption, ensuring that their workforce is prepared to respond effectively to new challenges.

Strategic learning not only equips employees to manage immediate changes but also helps them prepare for long-term success. It fosters a mindset that embraces continuous improvement, innovation, and proactive problem-solving. As Ben Sieke, Head of Learning at Delta Dental, shared in our Learning livestream event, "Skills are the currency of learning... They touch many different roles and enable both individual and organizational growth."

Organizations that invest in this strategic approach will not only mitigate the risks associated with rapid change but will also create a sustainable pathway for growth and competitive advantage.

Strategic learning not only equips employees to manage immediate changes but also helps them prepare for long-term success.

Section 2: Comprehensive Skills Strategies Across the Enterprise

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, comprehensive skills strategies are no longer optional—they are essential for driving performance, supporting adaptability, and sustaining competitive advantage. As AI and other disruptive technologies reshape industries, organizations must develop holistic approaches to skill growth that align learning efforts with broader business goals while addressing individual employee needs. This section explores how a multifaceted skills strategy, encompassing executive, employee, and strategic learning perspectives, can create a foundation for effective talent development across the enterprise.

72% of employers say that a lack of clarity into employee skills creates a cost or burden to the organization, but there isn't always a clear path on what to do next.

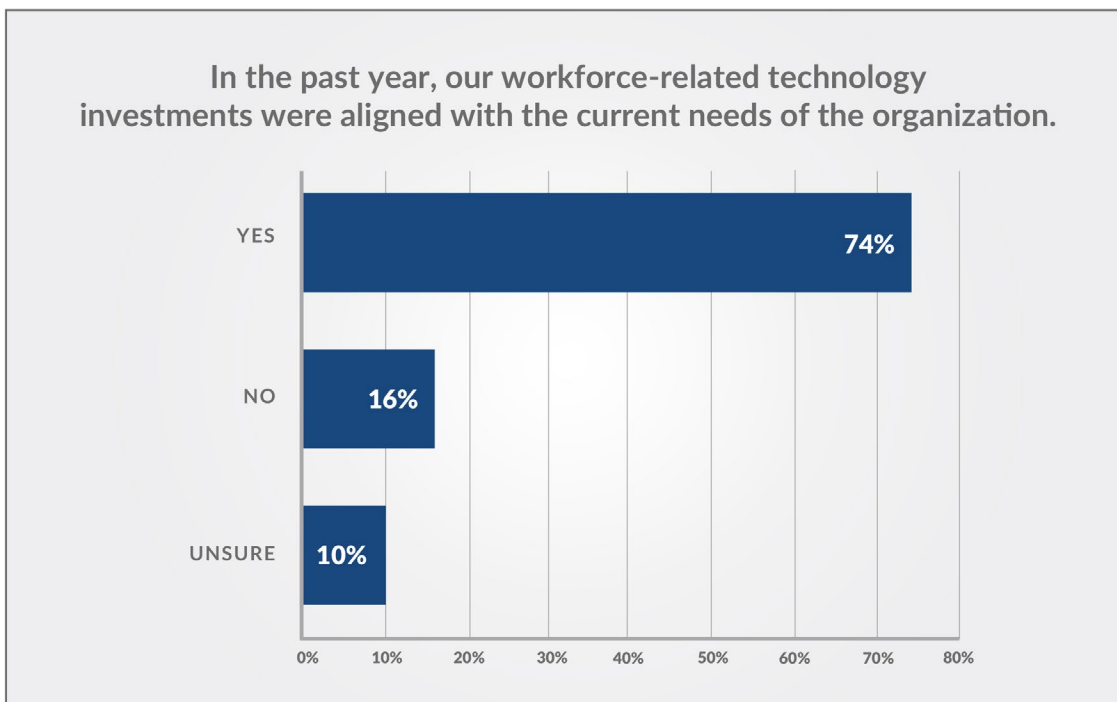**Figure 3: Lack of Skill Clarity Creates Operational Risk**
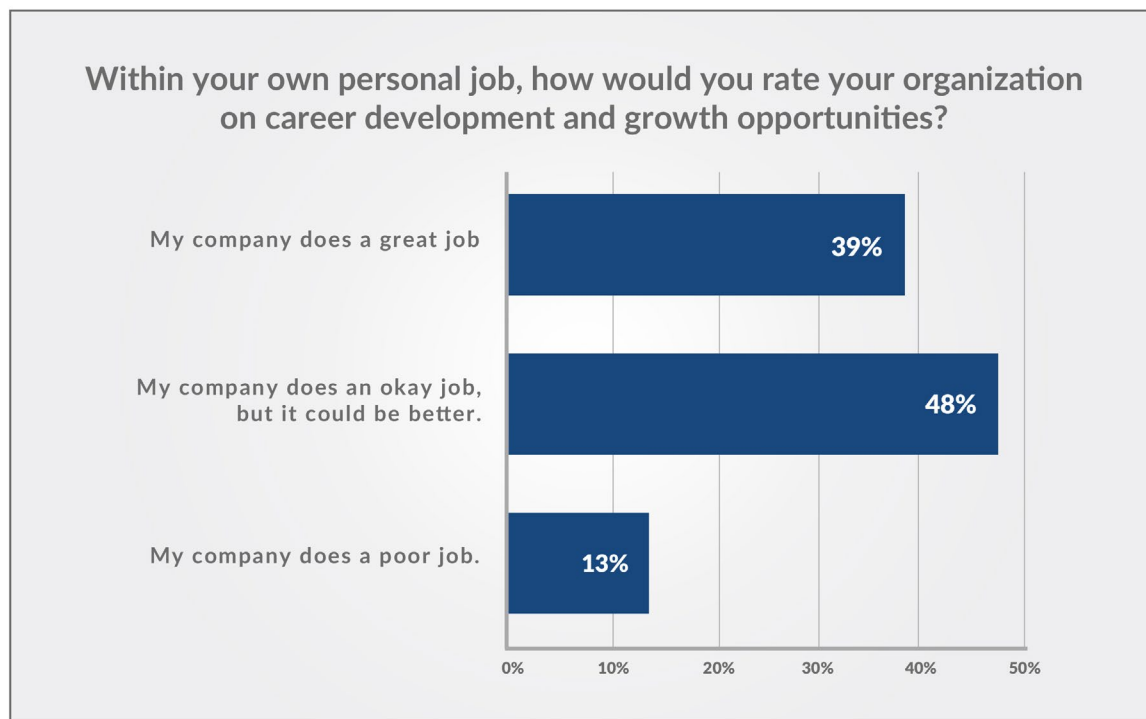
Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)

The Executive Perspective: Strategic Insights and Value

For skills strategies to deliver maximum value, they must be anchored in the organization's strategic vision. Executives play a pivotal role in defining the skills critical for the organization's future success, but that has to be communicated throughout the business to ensure effectiveness. **Nine out of 10 companies say they have a plan for future readiness, but only 16% of employees strongly agree that their employer invests the resources to grow skills for future success,** demonstrating a significant gap in strategic alignment. This misalignment often results in training initiatives that fail to deliver on expected outcomes, reducing the overall impact of learning investments.

Figure 4: Leadership Clarity on Future Skills

In the past year, our workforce-related technology investments were aligned with the current needs of the organization.

YES	74%
NO	16%
UNSURE	10%

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Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)
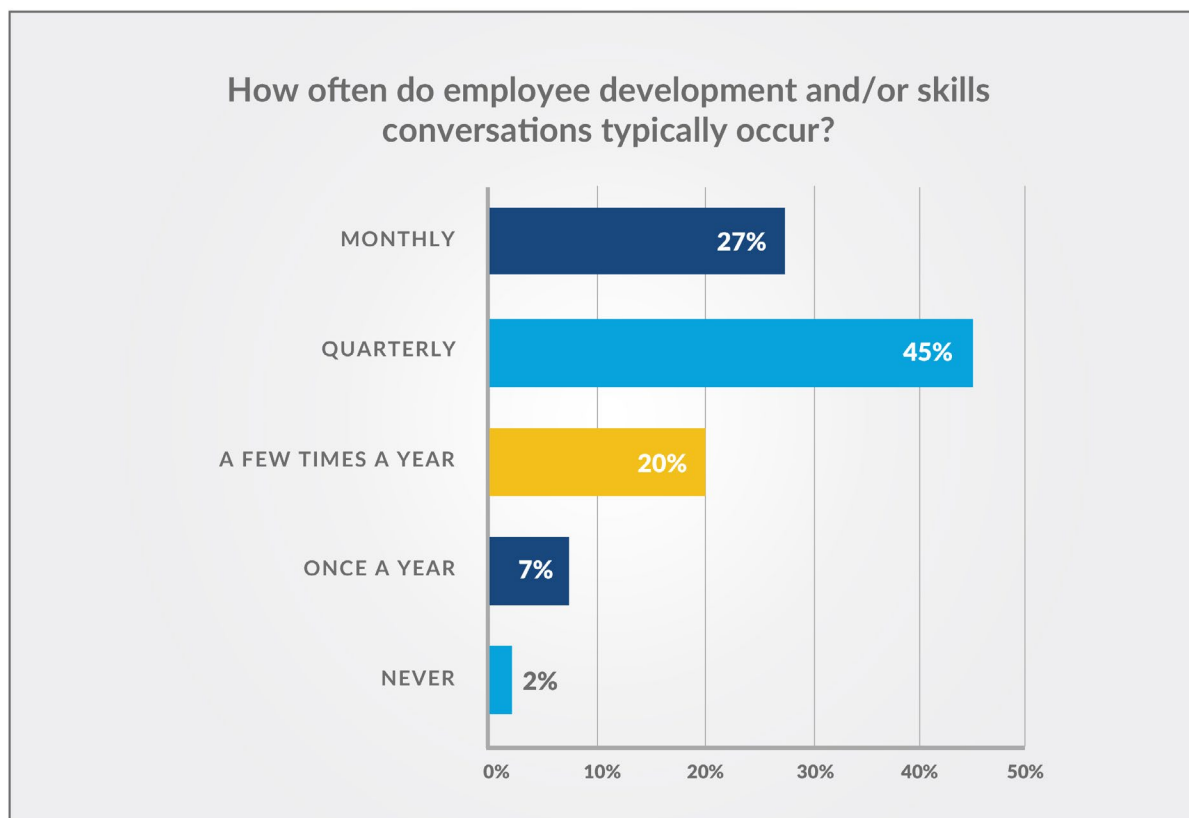
To overcome this gap, executives need to approach skill development as an integral component of the organization's broader strategy, not as an isolated HR function. As discovered in the research, organizations with a formal strategy foskill development are twice as likely to experience productivity gains compared to those without one. By embedding skill strategies into strategic planning, organizations can ensure that the skills cultivated align with the company's evolving goals, from driving digital transformation to improving customer experience.

Executives must also support the visibility and use of real-time skill data. Companies that have implemented skill dashboards for executives are 90% more likely to report having a highly agile workforce. These dashboards provide leaders with insights into existing capabilities, critical gaps, and emerging skill requirements, enabling more informed decision-making. With this approach, executives can not only prioritize skill development but also evaluate the return on investment (ROI) of learning programs.

The Employee Perspective: Practical and Relevant Skill Development

Employees are the most direct beneficiaries of skill strategies, making their involvement crucial for successful implementation. A skills-first approach must be tailored to individual needs, aligning skill development with career aspirations and job roles. The workforce responses in the research back this up. If learners have not yet talked with their manager about the skills they need for future success on the job, they are three and a half times more likely to say their company's learning culture is one that only prioritizes business outcomes, not employee learning outcomes.

Figure 5: Skills Conversations with Managers

How often do employee development and/or skills conversations typically occur?

Category	Percentage
MONTHLY	27%
QUARTERLY	45%
A FEW TIMES A YEAR	20%
ONCE A YEAR	7%
NEVER	2%

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)

Personalized learning paths play a critical role in boosting engagement and retention. AI-driven learning platforms can analyze employee data to recommend tailored courses and skill-building activities, matching each individual's unique requirements. For example, microlearning modules that address specific skills gaps can increase uptake by delivering bite-sized, easily digestible content. This approach not only enhances skill acquisition but also supports continuous growth, as employees can quickly apply new skills in their roles.

The Chief People Officer at OneCall reinforced this perspective, noting, "When you align training with individual goals and make it relevant, employees not only engage more, but they also see a clear pathway for growth." This reinforces the idea that aligning skills development with personal aspirations can drive stronger engagement, greater retention, and higher performance across the workforce.

The Strategic Learning Function: Guiding Skill Growth Across the Enterprise

The strategic learning function acts as the bridge between organizational goals and individual development, guiding and supporting skill growth across the enterprise. Learning leaders must design experiences that address both immediate performance needs and future skill requirements, ensuring that the organization remains prepared for evolving challenges.

This isn't just a hope. **When learners have the right types and amounts of training available to them, they are three times more likely to be future-oriented in their thinking.**

Henry Ford, the famous founder of Ford Motor Company, said that he wanted executives on his team who weren't just busy all the time—he wanted those that would put their feet up on the desk and dream. He knew that a future-focused mindset was key to long-term innovation, growth, and business success.

Learning bridges what companies have today and what they need tomorrow, and a skills-based approach can create a more tangible and achievable future.

A skills-based learning strategy should include:

> • **Skills Ontology and Mapping:** Developing or adopting a comprehensive skills ontology allows organizations to create a clear map of existing capabilities and identify critical skill gaps. According to the research, organizations with clear visibility into workforce skills are twice as likely to have a highly adaptable workforce. This approach helps in designing targeted learning interventions that not only close existing gaps but also anticipate future demands.

> • **Data-Driven Learning:** Leveraging AI-powered analytics can provide insights into learning preferences, engagement rates, and skill progression. By analyzing this data, learning teams can identify patterns and tailor programs to meet both individual and organizational needs. Use of AI in learning jumped from 2023 to 2024, highlighting a hunger to increase employee engagement and learning effectiveness.

> • **Integrated Learning Systems:** The strategic learning function should employ learning management systems (LMS) that integrate seamlessly with other HR and talent management platforms. This integration enables comprehensive data collection, providing insights into both hard and soft skills. With access to this data, learning leaders can design more informed programs that align skill development with organizational objectives, boosting workforce adaptability and agility.

Key Strategies for Skill Development

To effectively deploy a skills-based strategy, organizations must implement a set of practices that address the diverse needs of the workforce. The following strategies can help organizations achieve a holistic and effective skills strategy:

> **1. Leadership Alignment and Buy-In:** Executive buy-in is critical to creating a skills-first culture that permeates all levels of the organization. Visible support from leaders, along with regular communication about the importance of skill growth, encourages employees to actively participate in training initiatives.

2. Equitable Access to Training: Organizations must ensure that learning resources are available to all employees, not just those in leadership or high-performing roles. The research indicates that nearly half (47%) of employees feel that skill development opportunities are not fairly distributed, leading to disengagement and increased turnover. To combat this, companies should democratize access to training by providing flexible, scalable options that reach all levels of the organization.

3. Blended Learning Models: Employees have different learning preferences, making it important to offer a variety of formats, including in-person workshops, virtual training, microlearning, and experiential learning. Research seems to support that organizations with a blended learning approach have higher skill retention rates, as this method caters to diverse learning styles.

4. Continuous Feedback and Evaluation: Skill development is an ongoing process that requires regular feedback. Learning leaders should establish mechanisms for continuous assessment, allowing employees to track progress, receive feedback, and refine their learning paths as needed. Real-time feedback loops, supported by AI-driven analytics, can help measure learning effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

5. Skills-Based Career Paths: Organizations that offer clear, skills-based career paths are more likely to retain top talent. Employees who understand how skill development aligns with career progression are twice as likely to remain with their employer. By mapping skills to roles and career paths, organizations can create transparent pathways for advancement, motivating employees to engage in learning and skill-building activities.

Aligning Strategies for Maximum Impact

To maximize the impact of skill strategies, organizations must align efforts across executive, employee, and strategic learning perspectives. This alignment ensures that skill development is not only relevant and accessible but also tied to measurable business outcomes. Lighthouse Research & Advisory data reveals that organizations with highly adaptable workforces are 44% more likely to report revenue increases,

further demonstrating the direct opportunity for learning to connect with business outcomes.

Organizations that excel in skill development often see a ripple effect across other areas of the business, such as improved retention, enhanced employee satisfaction, and increased innovation. One learning executive highlighted this during are recent research interview, stating, "When you create a culture where skills development is embedded in everyday work, it not only supports current business needs but also prepares employees for future challenges."

The research seems to paint some interesting and logical correlations to business results.

Figure 6: Learning Connections with Company Revenue

	Companies with revenue increases	Companies with revenue decreases
I feel confident in our ability to develop the skills of our employees (strongly agree).	52%	23%
We have a formal plan for future readiness and are adjusting to meet changing business conditions.	43%	18%
Our workforce is highly adaptable to change.	46%	18%
My organization has already started developing skills of the future.	53%	23%
We have a culture of learning that promotes development and/or talent mobility.	75%	43%
Skill gaps are known and targeted in our talent strategies.	53%	29%
My organization has examined the workforce skills that might be at risk of automation due to AI.	30%	16%

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,172 employers)

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Conclusion: Building a Future-Ready Workforce

Effective skills strategies require a comprehensive approach that integrates executive support, personalized learning, and strategic alignment. By implementing a holistic skills strategy, organizations can cultivate a workforce that is adaptable, engaged, and aligned with business objectives. This not only mitigates risks associated with rapid change but also positions the organization for sustained success in an increasingly complex and competitive environment.

Organizations that prioritize these strategies will be better equipped to foster a culture of continuous learning, enhance employee engagement, and drive performance. As AI and other technologies continue to reshape the business landscape, a well-developed skills strategy remains one of the most valuable tools for building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

Section 3: Learner Outcomes and Business Benefits of Learning

Strategic learning initiatives have a significant impact on both employee outcomes and broader business performance. Beyond merely enhancing individual skills, effective learning programs drive employee engagement, support retention, reduce risk, and contribute to overall business value. In an environment characterized by rapid technological changes, a comprehensive learning strategy is essential for organizations looking to sustain competitiveness, boost workforce competence, and foster a culture of belonging.

Learning as a Driver of Employee Engagement and Retention

Employee engagement is directly influenced by the quality of learning and development opportunities offered by organizations. When employees feel that their skills are actively developed, they are more likely to be engaged, productive, and committed. The study revealed that **employees who feel adequately supported in their skills development are two and a half times more likely to find a sense of purpose at work.** This sense of purpose enhances motivation and satisfaction, making employees more invested in their roles.

Retention is another critical outcome of effective learning. According to the Lighthouse data, **employees who receive the right types and amounts training are five times more likely to stay with their organization compared to those who do not receive adequate development opportunities.** This finding underscores the importance of viewing learning not as an ancillary function but as a core driver of talent retention. A learning executive on the Lighthouse Learning Research Advisory Board emphasized that "skill development must be aligned with clear career paths to drive engagement and retention." By offering personalized learning that aligns with individual aspirations, organizations can create a pathway for career growth that reduces turnover.

This is exactly what the research seems to indicate.

Figure 7: Investment in Skills Drives Key Retention Outcomes

Employer Investment in Skill Development Drives Retention

- 63% — I'm happy with no plans to quit my job (My employer invests)
- 30% — I'm happy with no plans to quit my job (DOES NOT invest)
- 13% — I'm planning to quit within 3 months (My employer invests)
- 22% — I'm planning to quit within 3 months (DOES NOT invest)
- 15% — I'm planning to quit witin 6 months (My employer invests)
- 31% — I'm planning to quit witin 6 months (DOES NOT invest)

■ My employer invests the time and resources to ensure my fellow employees and I have the skills we need for future success.

■ My employer DOES NOT invest the time and resources in our skills.

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,000 workers)

This clearly illustrates just how valuable it is for employers to invest in skills with a view on the long-term, not just the short-term skill gaps that may exist today.

Additionally, the workforce data points show that **76% of employees who believe their organization prioritizes learning and growth opportunities report having no plans to leave their current role.** This highlights the powerful connection between strategic learning and employee retention, making it clear that a strong focus on skill development is vital for reducing turnover costs and maintaining workforce stability.

Learning as a Tool for Reducing Risk and Enhancing Competence

In addition to boosting engagement and retention, learning plays a crucial role in reducing business risks and enhancing workforce competence. As AI, automation, and other disruptive technologies reshape industries, the need for up-to-date skills becomes increasingly urgent. 78% of workers say they think about the future in a proactive manner when their company has a culture that promotes career growth and skill development, and more than 90% of those workers say they are able to achieve

the productivity their company expects from them. This adaptability not only mitigates risks associated with technological shifts but also enhances overall workforce agility.

Compliance training remains a fundamental component of risk management. The majority of companies say they are compliant in how they approach onboarding training, for example, but only 15% of them say they their approach to onboarding is both compliant and personalized/engaging.

So much compliance training is rote memorization and doesn't translate as well to the real-world scenarios employees face. Effective compliance training should be complemented by broader skill development that prepares employees to navigate unexpected changes, from new regulations to shifting market conditions.

Six in 10 employees say that the skills they need to succeed at work have changed since they originally took the position.

Six in 10 employees say that the skills they need to succeed at work have changed since they originally took the position. In a world that evolves quickly, employee competence at their work is a moving target. It's critical to be compliant, yes, but it's also a priority to ensure that workers are developing quickly enough to be capable and productive.

Think about it like an investment for retirement purposes. If you are investing in something that makes a 3% return, but inflation runs at 4% annually, the money is actually **shrinking** every year by 1%. The same is true of employee skills. If they are growing at a pace that doesn't keep up with the rate of change, then employees are still falling behind in terms of productivity, innovation, and potentially even compliance requirements as well.

Ben Sieke, Head of Talent Development at Delta Dental, said it well: *"Learning isn't just about compliance—it's about preparing employees for what's next."* This perspective aligns with the idea that strategic learning must extend beyond mandatory training

to include critical thinking, problem-solving, and soft skills that contribute to overall workforce competence. By fostering these skills, organizations can reduce risks, enhance operational resilience, and support more effective decision-making.

Learning as a Catalyst for Business Performance and Innovation

The benefits of learning extend beyond individual employee outcomes to directly impact business performance. Organizations that prioritize strategic learning are more likely to experience growth, innovation, and improved financial outcomes. **Organizations with a formal strategy for future skill development are twice as likely to experience productivity gains compared to those without one.** This correlation emphasizes the direct relationship between skill development and business performance, making learning a critical driver of organizational value.

Innovation is also fueled by strategic learning efforts. Employees who have access to diverse learning opportunities are better equipped to contribute creative ideas, solve complex problems, and drive process improvements. Organizations with a positive, proactive learning culture are more likely to report higher levels of innovation, as employees are encouraged to experiment, collaborate, and apply new skills in their roles.

Learners that work in a company with a positive learning culture are 60% more likely to strongly agree with this statement: "When I see something I don't like, I fix it." Those people are the ones who are leaning forward, going the extra mile, and leaving a positive impact on the customers and workplace everyday.

Terri Lewis, CHRO of One Call, agrees, "When skill development is embedded in everyday work, it not only supports business needs but also drives a culture of innovation." By making learning an integral part of the work environment, organizations can cultivate a mindset of continuous improvement, positioning themselves to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Learning's Impact on Belonging and Inclusion

Learning also fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion, which are critical elements of a healthy organizational culture. Employees who feel that their growth is supported are more likely to feel valued and included, regardless of their role, tenure, or location.

Equity in access to training is essential for fostering a culture of inclusion. Organizations that democratize learning—making it accessible to all employees, rather than just high performers or leadership roles—report lower turnover rates and higher levels of engagement. The learner data in the study found that employees with equitable access to training are 30% more likely to report improved employee belonging. This underscores the importance of inclusive learning strategies that empower all employees to grow, regardless of their starting point.

The Head of Learning at Delta Dental reinforced this concept, emphasizing that "equitable access to training is not just a moral imperative—it's a business strategy." By ensuring that all employees have the opportunity to learn and grow, organizations can build a culture that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) while simultaneously boosting engagement and performance, as evidenced by the chart below.

Figure 8: High Belonging Drives Key Learning Outcomes and Behaviors

	High Belonging Score	Low Belonging Score
I feel confident in my organization's ability to develop my skills.	75%	22%
My company makes training available to ALL employees.	59%	26%
When my company changes priorities, I feel like I am the last to know about it.	26%	58%
My manager has worked with me to understand how my skills contribute to the company's success.	71%	28%
Our company has a learning culture that prioritizes skill development and/or career growth.	62%	13%

Source: 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study (n=1,000 workers)

As the research clearly indicates, employee belonging is a powerful enabler of outcomes that matter to the workforce and to the business. A sense of belonging drives a nearly fivefold increase in the perceptions of a positive, employee-friendly learning culture.

Building a Culture of Continuous Learning

For organizations to fully realize the benefits of learning, they must cultivate a culture where continuous learning is the norm. This involves not only providing access to training but also creating an environment that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and growth. According to the study, organizations that have successfully built a culture of continuous learning report a 50% higher likelihood of increased employee productivity and innovation.

Creating this culture requires visible support from leadership, integration of learning into everyday workflows, and regular feedback loops. AI-driven learning platforms can support this process by offering personalized content recommendations, tracking progress, and providing real-time insights into skill development. As noted by Sieke, "It's about creating a system where learning is embedded, where it becomes a natural part of the workday rather than an extra task."

Conclusion: Learning as a Strategic Business Lever

Strategic learning delivers substantial benefits at both individual and organizational levels. By driving engagement, reducing risk, supporting innovation, and emphasizing a culture of belonging, effective learning initiatives enhance overall business performance and competitiveness. Organizations that invest in continuous, inclusive, and strategic learning will not only retain top talent but also achieve sustainable growth in an increasingly complex and disruptive landscape.

By aligning skill development with business goals, organizations can create a workforce that is not only competent and adaptable but also deeply engaged and motivated. As AI and other technologies continue to transform the business environment, learning remains one of the most powerful levers for driving both employee outcomes and business success.

Key Takeaways and Conclusion
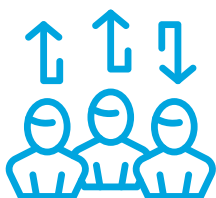
Learning as a Driver of Adaptability and Agility

Employees who receive adequate training are 86% more likely to describe themselves as adaptable to change. As AI and other disruptive technologies reshape the workplace, organizations that invest in continuous learning are better equipped to stay competitive and agile.

Misalignment of Learning and Business Goals

Only 30% of companies rate themselves as highly effective at aligning learning and development with business objectives. This misalignment limits the impact of training efforts, underscoring the need for a strategic skills approach that bridges the gap between organizational goals and workforce development.

Learning Increases Retention

Employees who feel their skills are developed adequately are five times more likely to remain with their current employer. Strategic learning not only enhances performance but also reduces turnover costs and improves workforce stability.

Skill Visibility Enhances Organizational Agility

Organizations with clear visibility into workforce skills are 90% more likely to have a highly agile workforce. Implementing skills dashboards and analytics can drive data-driven decisions, helping to identify skill gaps and align learning programs more effectively.

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Key Takeaways and Conclusion

Learning Boosts Employee Belonging

Employees supported in their skills development are 2.5 times more likely to say that training helps them find a sense of purpose at work. Through the power of a culture of learning, organizations can enhance employee engagement, belonging, and motivation.
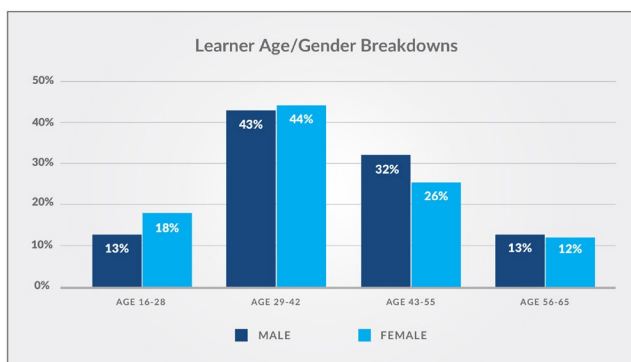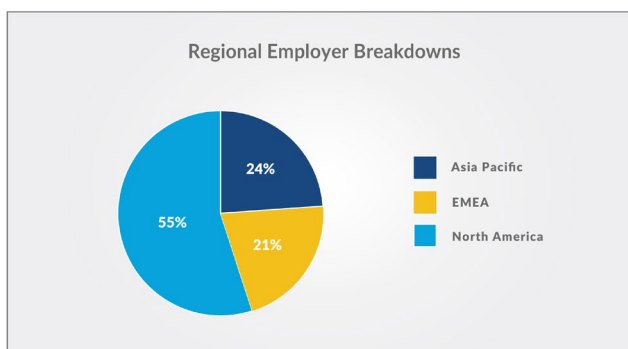
Impact of Learning on Business Performance

Companies with a strong focus on skill development report a 44% higher likelihood of increased revenue. Learning, when strategically aligned, contributes to overall business value, driving growth and innovation.

About the Study

The 2024 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Learning, Skills, and Talent Mobility Study consists of responses from 1,000 global workers that are currently employed in full-time work in North America, EMEA, and Asia Pacific. It also leverages survey responses from 1,172 global employers (with a minimum of 1,000 employees on staff) from 18 different countries.

Learner Age/Gender Breakdowns

	AGE 16-28	AGE 29-42	AGE 43-55	AGE 56-65
MALE	13%	43%	32%	13%
FEMALE	18%	44%	26%	12%

Regional Employer Breakdowns

- Asia Pacific — 24%
- EMEA — 21%
- North America — 55%

Statement of Ethics: *as an independent analyst firm, our research and reporting provide unbiased, neutral views of the HR trends and technologies impacting work today. While this specific research was vendor-funded, it does not impact how we share the data with employers and practitioners. If you have any questions, please contact us.*

Appendix

To learn more about our research and how we partner with technology and service providers in talent acquisition, HR, learning, and more, ***please reach out to our team.*** If you're an employer that wants to see additional data for your industry or size, or if you want to have our team speak with your team on the latest insights, you can ***learn more here***.

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Employer
Data

What are your employee development priorities for the coming year?
(select up to three)
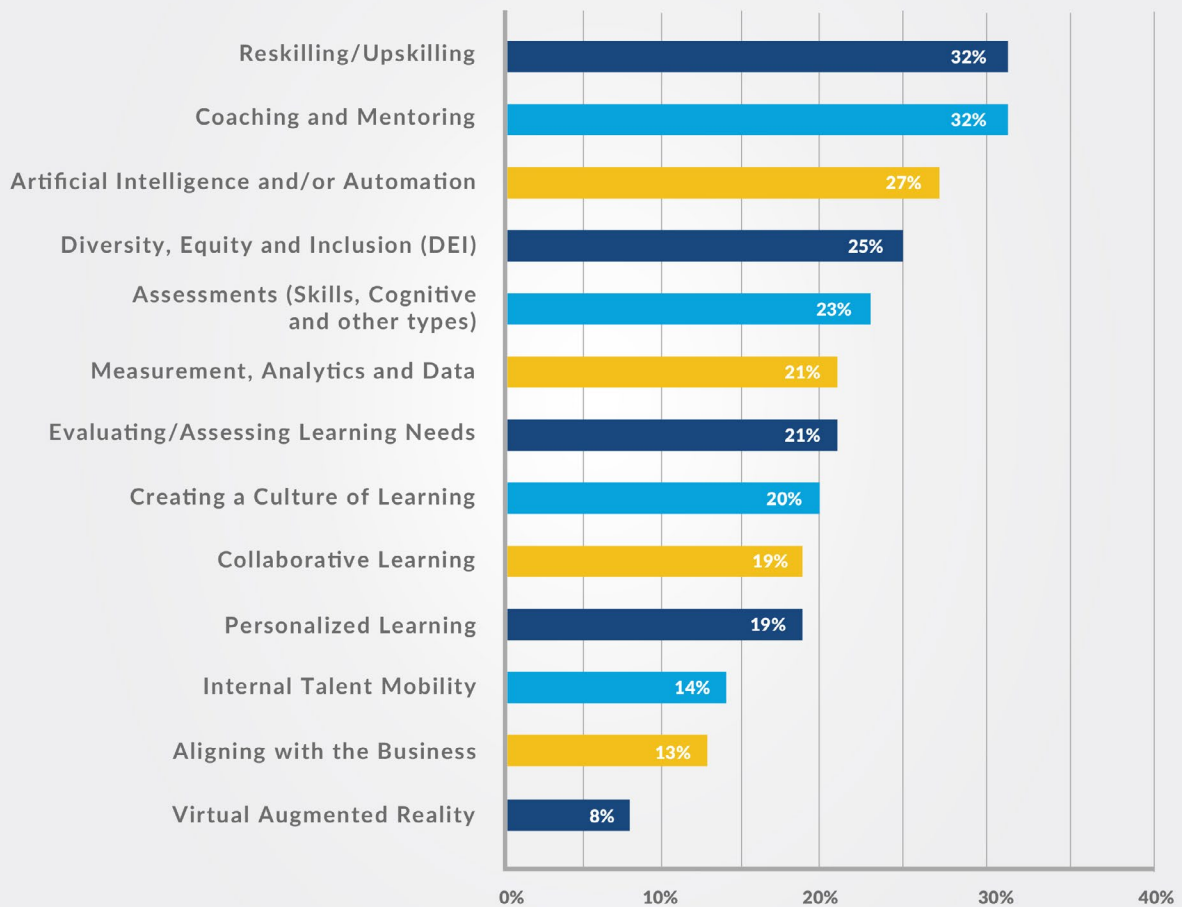
Priority	Percentage
Reskilling/Upskilling	32%
Coaching and Mentoring	32%
Artificial Intelligence and/or Automation	27%
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)	25%
Assessments (Skills, Cognitive and other types)	23%
Measurement, Analytics and Data	21%
Evaluating/Assessing Learning Needs	21%
Creating a Culture of Learning	20%
Collaborative Learning	19%
Personalized Learning	19%
Internal Talent Mobility	14%
Aligning with the Business	13%
Virtual Augmented Reality	8%

I feel confident in our ability to develop the skills of our employees.

STRONGLY AGREE	42%
AGREE	49%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	7%
DISAGREE	1%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0%
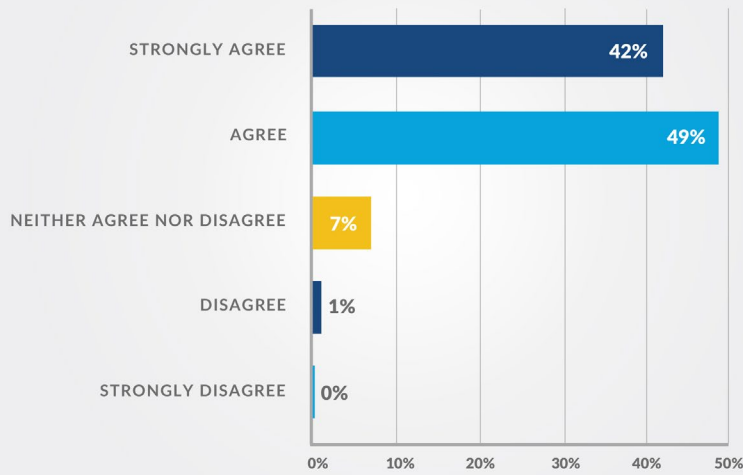
Our employee productivity is at its maximum capacity.

STRONGLY AGREE	21%
AGREE	32%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	23%
DISAGREE	22%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2%

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32
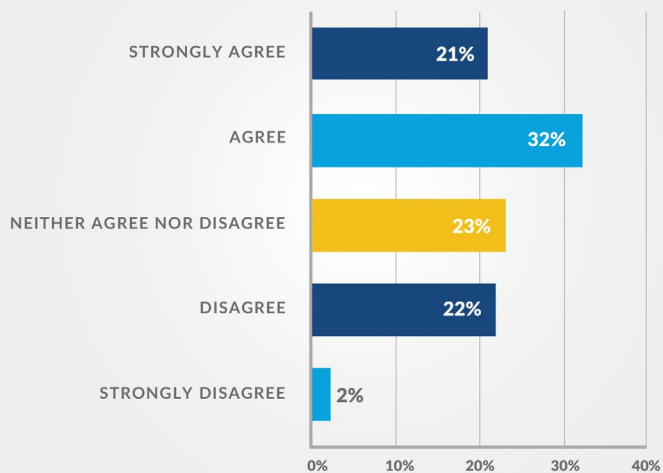
In the last 3 years, have you found that AI has increased the pace of workplace change?

STRONGLY AGREE	25%
AGREE	35%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	26%
DISAGREE	11%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	2%
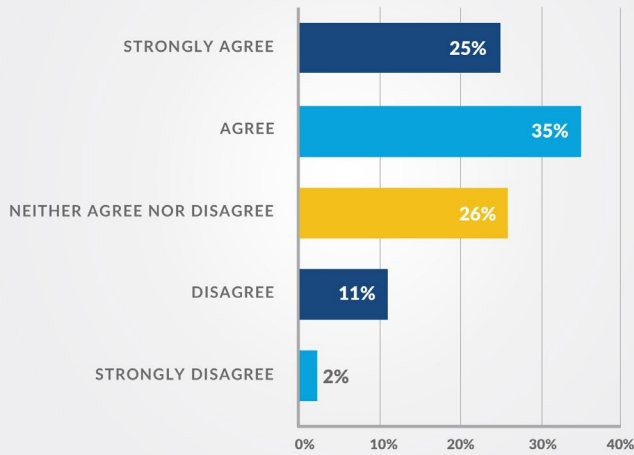
Over the last year, approximately what percentage of your organization's turnover was among employees with two or more years of tenure?

LESS THAN 10%	23%
11-25%	36%
26-50%	25%
51-75%	11%
MORE THAN 75%	5%
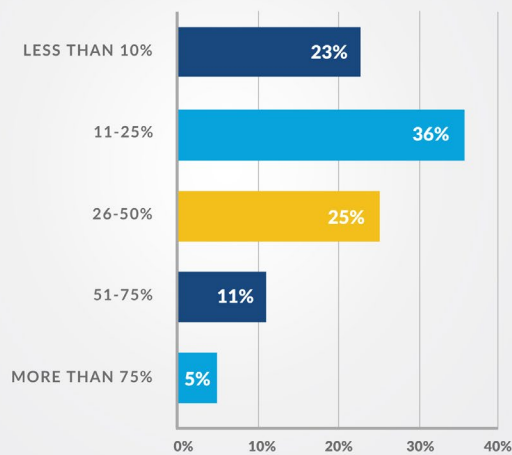
Which of the following best describes your company's future readiness?
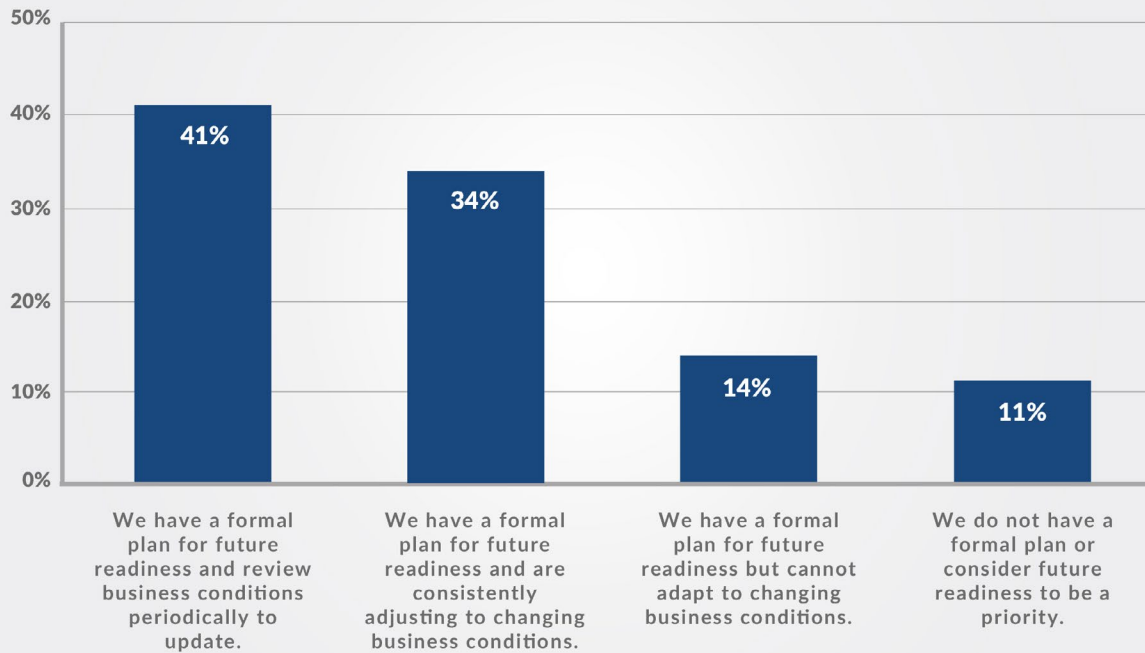
How does your learning technology affect organizational agility?
(Select all that apply)
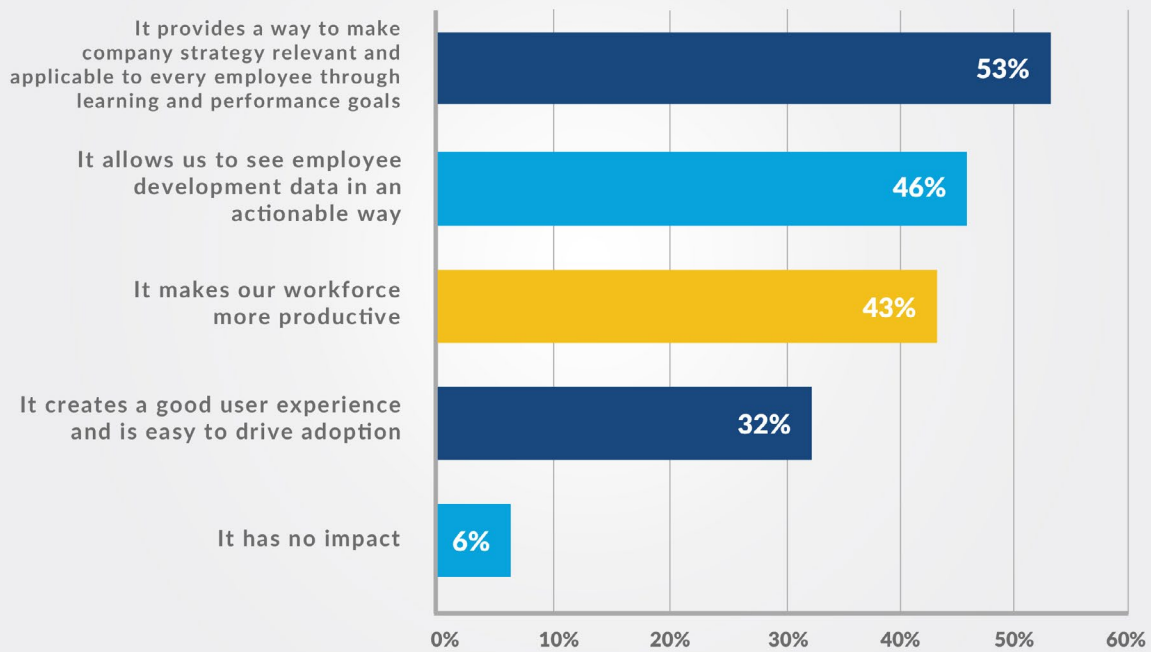
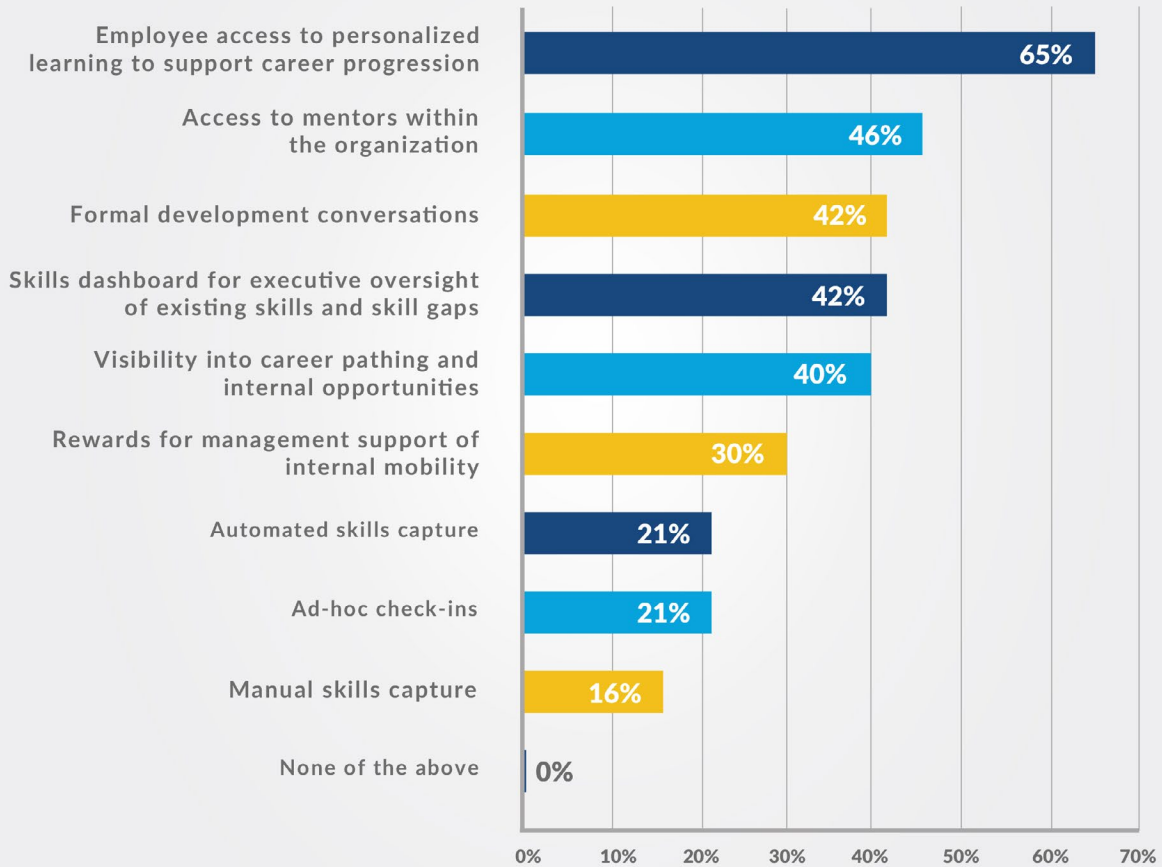My organization values and supports every single employee.

- STRONGLY AGREE — 35%
- AGREE — 44%
- NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE — 11%
- DISAGREE — 8%
- STRONGLY DISAGREE — 3%

Please rate the change readiness of the following groups.

Group	Not able to change	Able to change to some degree	Highly adaptable to change
Myself	2%	33%	65%
My Team/Department	3%	54%	43%
My Company's Leadership	11%	49%	41%
My Company's Overall Workforce	6%	57%	37%

■ Not able to change ■ Able to change to some degree ■ Highly adaptable to change
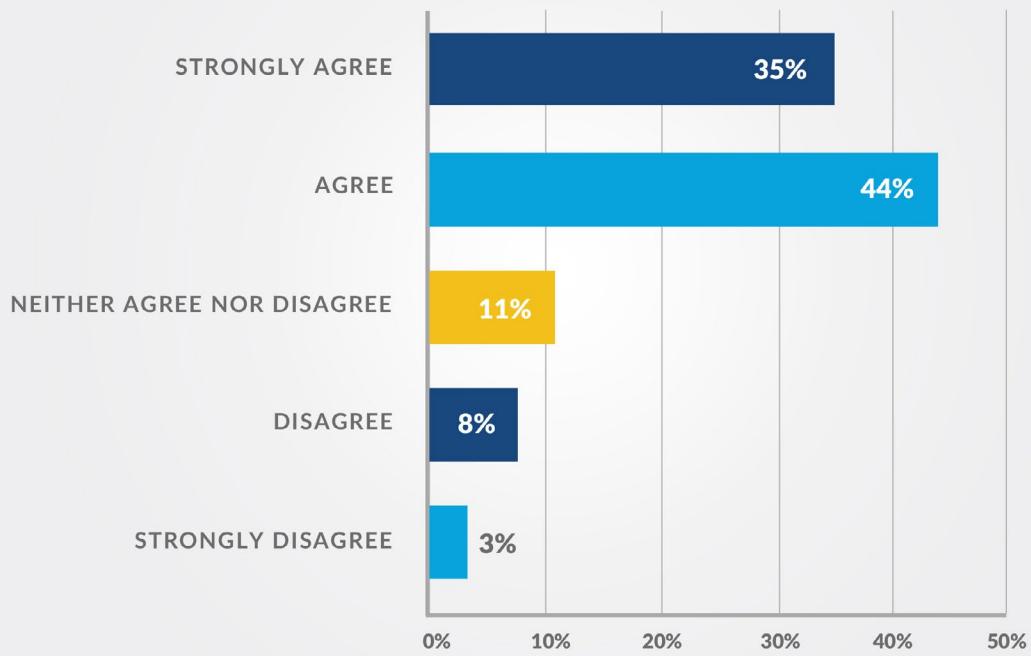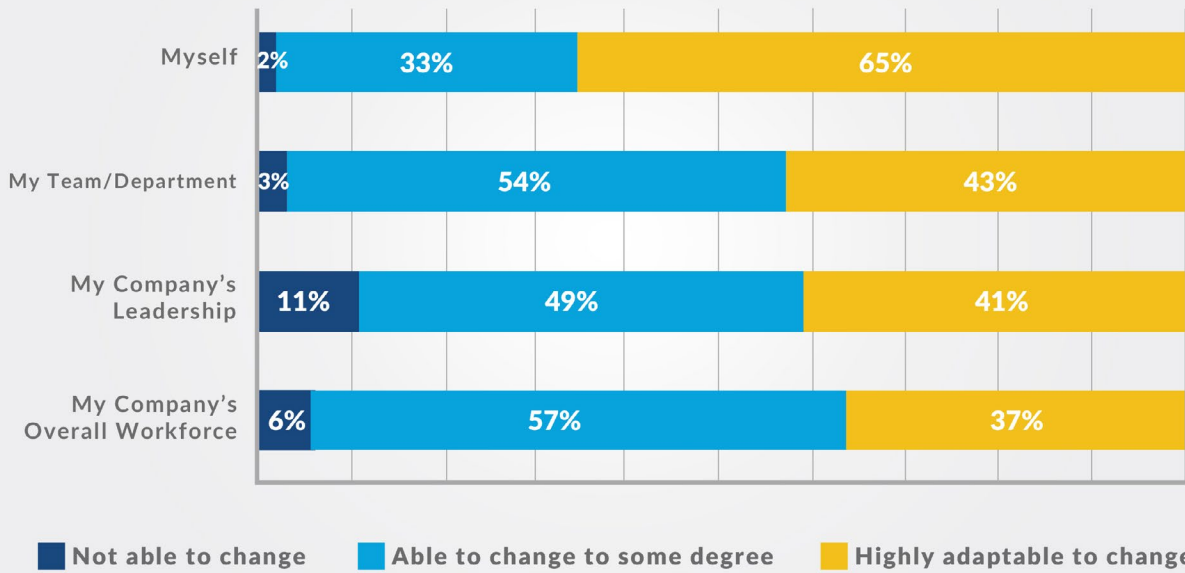
I believe my organization will significantly prioritize developing skills of the future.

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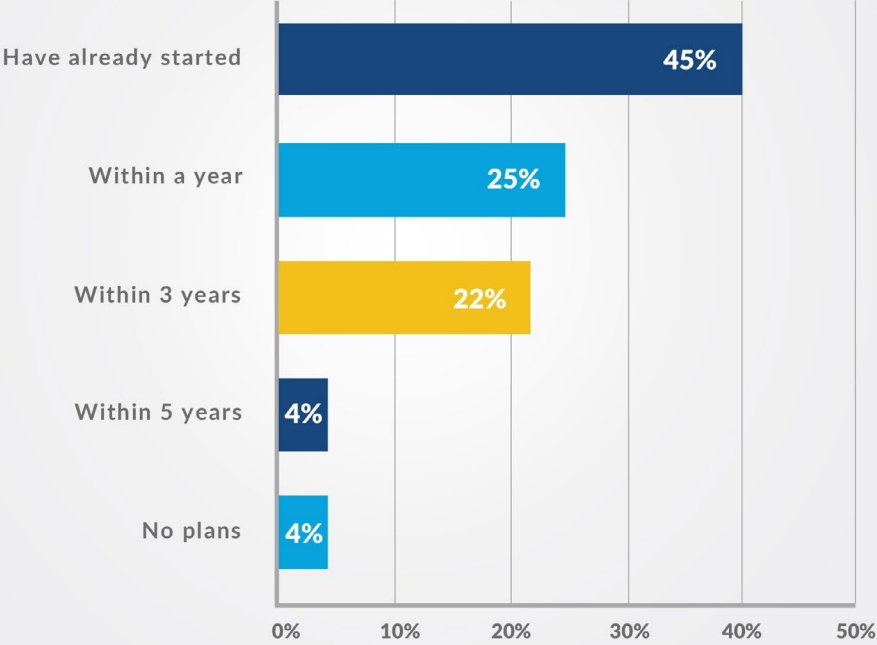
Which of the following options does your company currently use to support internal career mobility? (select all that apply)
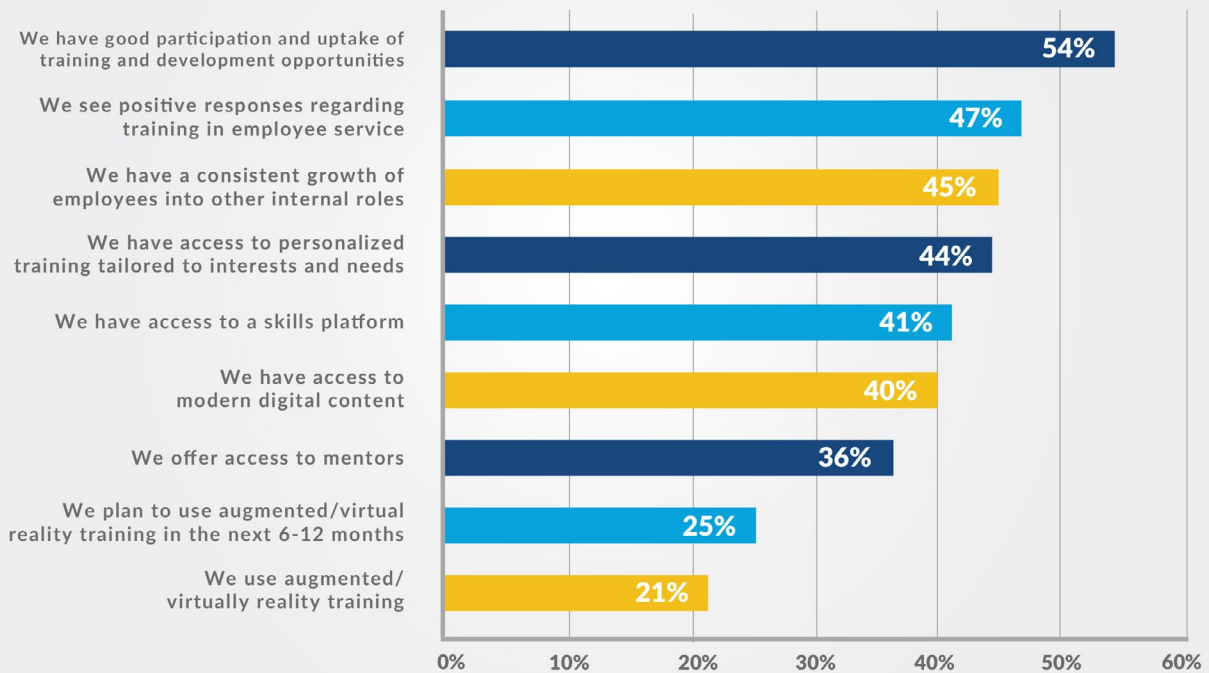
Option	Percentage
Employee access to personalized learning to support career progression	65%
Access to mentors within the organization	46%
Formal development conversations	42%
Skills dashboard for executive oversight of existing skills and skill gaps	42%
Visibility into career pathing and internal opportunities	40%
Rewards for management support of internal mobility	30%
Automated skills capture	21%
Ad-hoc check-ins	21%
Manual skills capture	16%
None of the above	0%

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Which of these best describes your organization's learning culture?

Response	Percentage
We have a culture of learning that promotes talent development and/or mobility	66%
Leadership talks about development and learning but managers do not support mobility within the org	28%
Management doesn't care about developing employees, they just want to see business results	6%
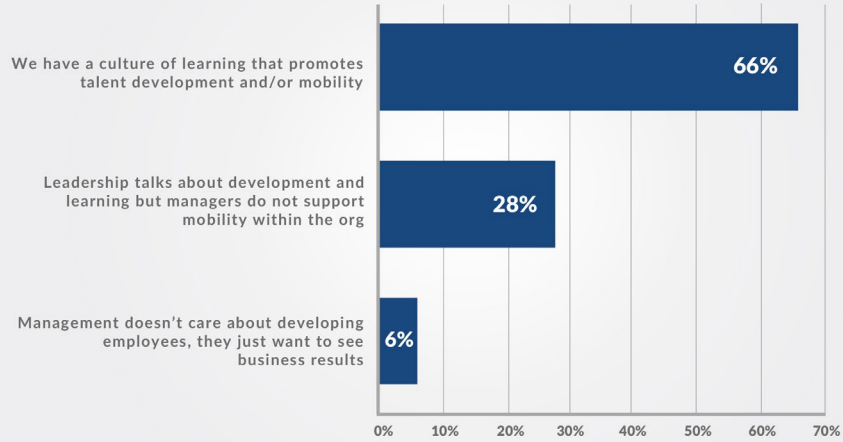
Does your organization's workforce get adequate training and development opportunities?

Response	Percentage
YES	80%
NO	14%
UNSURE	6%

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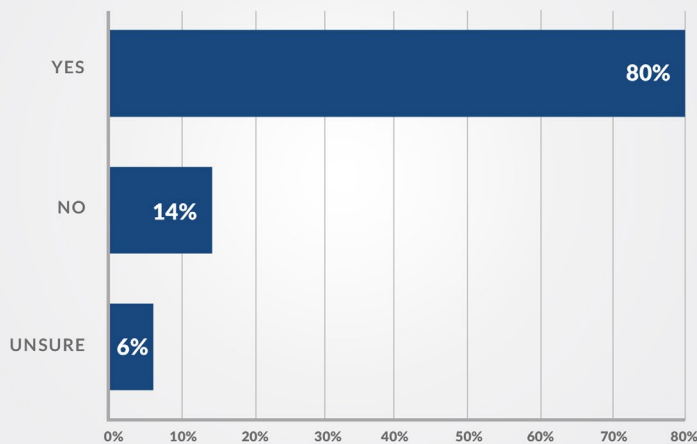
Why do you believe your workforce receives adequate training and development opportunities? (select all that apply)

We have good participation and uptake of training and development opportunities	54%
We see positive responses regarding training in employee service	47%
We have a consistent growth of employees into other internal roles	45%
We have access to personalized training tailored to interests and needs	44%
We have access to a skills platform	41%
We have access to modern digital content	40%
We offer access to mentors	36%
We plan to use augmented/virtual reality training in the next 6-12 months	25%
We use augmented/ virtually reality training	21%

What are your company's plans to provide adequate training and development opportunities in the future?
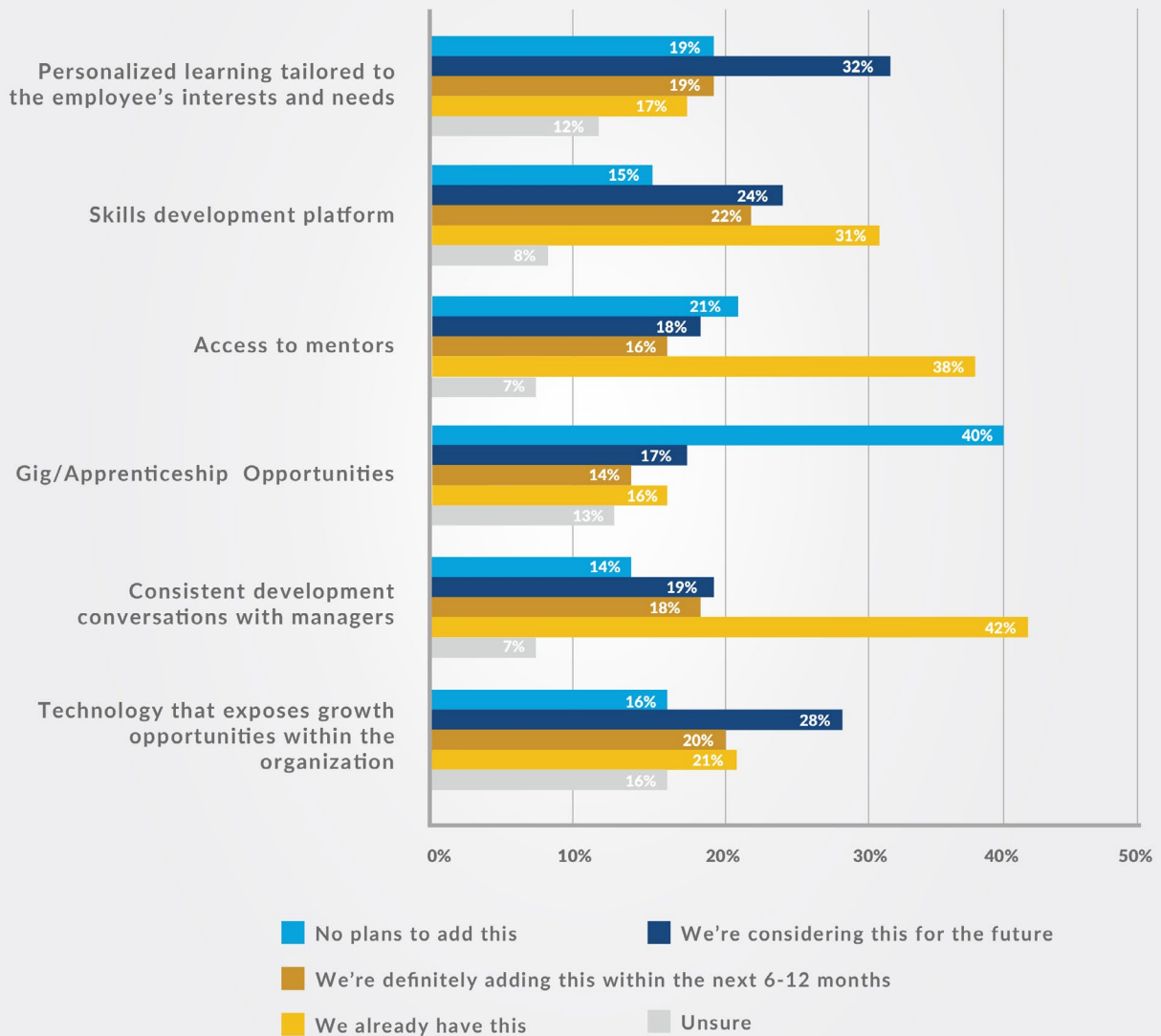
Personalized learning tailored to the employee's interests and needs
- 19%
- 32%
- 19%
- 17%
- 12%

Skills development platform
- 15%
- 24%
- 22%
- 31%
- 8%

Access to mentors
- 21%
- 18%
- 16%
- 38%
- 7%

Gig/Apprenticeship Opportunities
- 40%
- 17%
- 14%
- 16%
- 13%

Consistent development conversations with managers
- 14%
- 19%
- 18%
- 42%
- 7%

Technology that exposes growth opportunities within the organization
- 16%
- 28%
- 20%
- 21%
- 16%

Legend:
- No plans to add this
- We're considering this for the future
- We're definitely adding this within the next 6-12 months
- We already have this
- Unsure

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How often do employee development and/or skills conversations typically occur?

- MONTHLY — 27%
- QUARTERLY — 45%
- A FEW TIMES A YEAR — 20%
- ONCE A YEAR — 7%
- NEVER — 2%
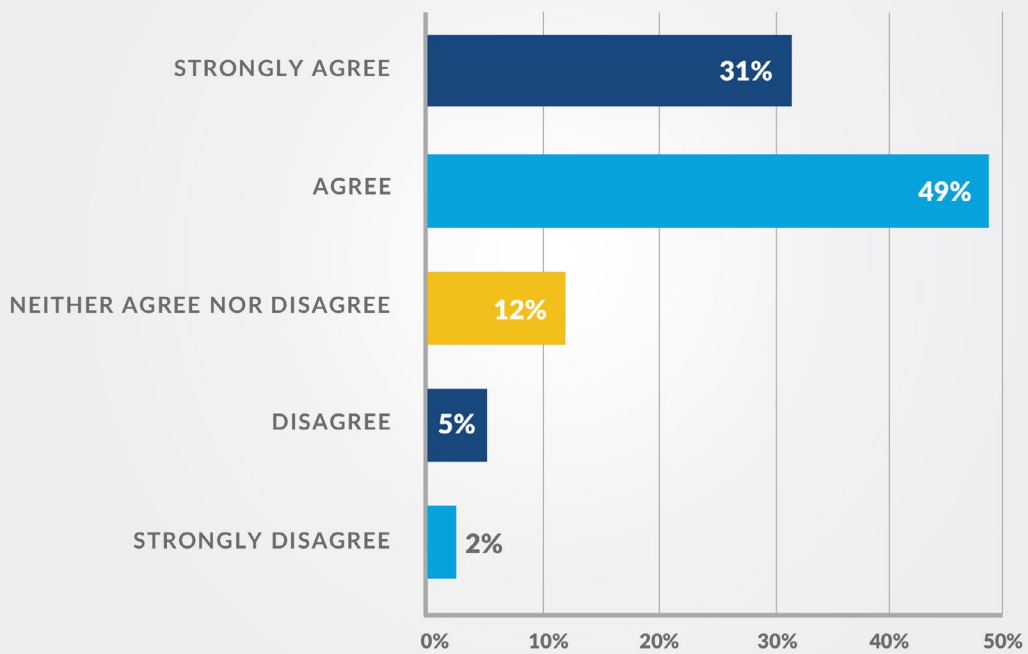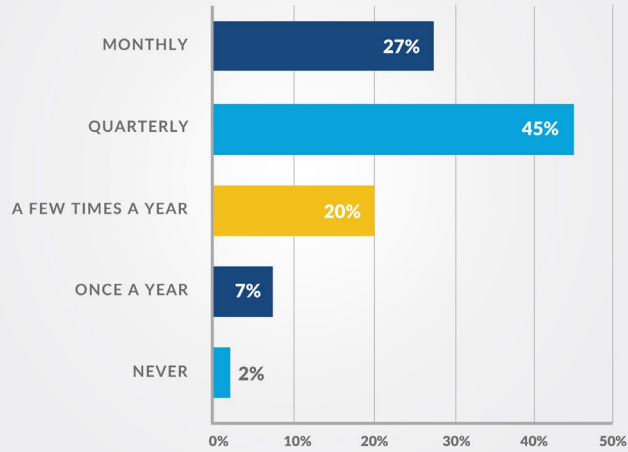
How would you rate your company's ability to consistently and rapidly onboard new hires, ensuring they become productive and ready to contribute effectively?

- STRONGLY AGREE — 27%
- AGREE — 51%
- NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE — 14%
- DISAGREE — 7%
- STRONGLY DISAGREE — 2%
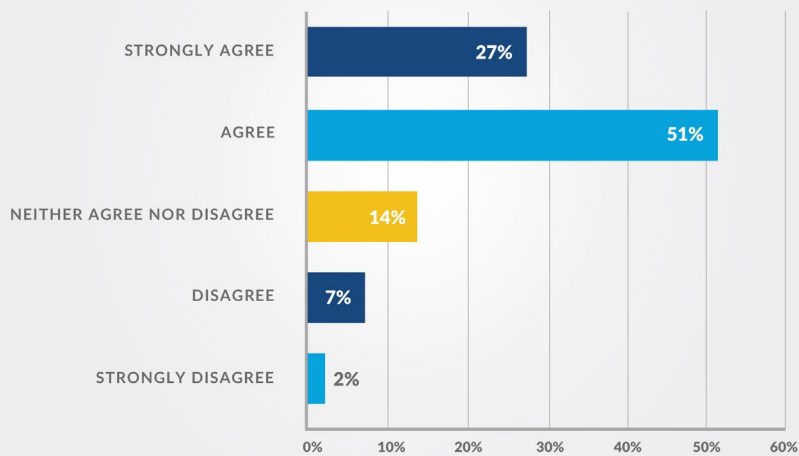
On average, how long does it take for your organization to align people, technology, and processes to meet a new business objective?

LESS THAN A MONTH	13%
1-3 MONTHS	35%
3-6 MONTHS	34%
6-12 MONTHS	12%
MORE THAN 12 MONTHS	6%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%
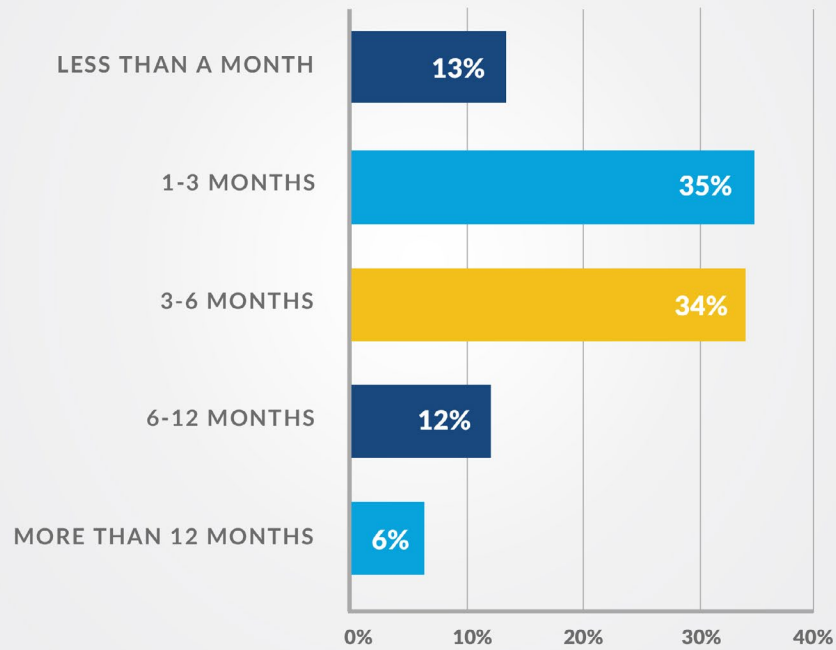
In which of the following areas is your organization currently leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies for talent management? (select all that apply)

Enhance employee performance evaluation	58%
Improve employee engagement and retention strategies	57%
Identify skill gaps and recommend personalized learning paths	53%
Analyze workforce data to identify trends and insights	51%
Streamline succession planning processes	41%
None of the above	4%
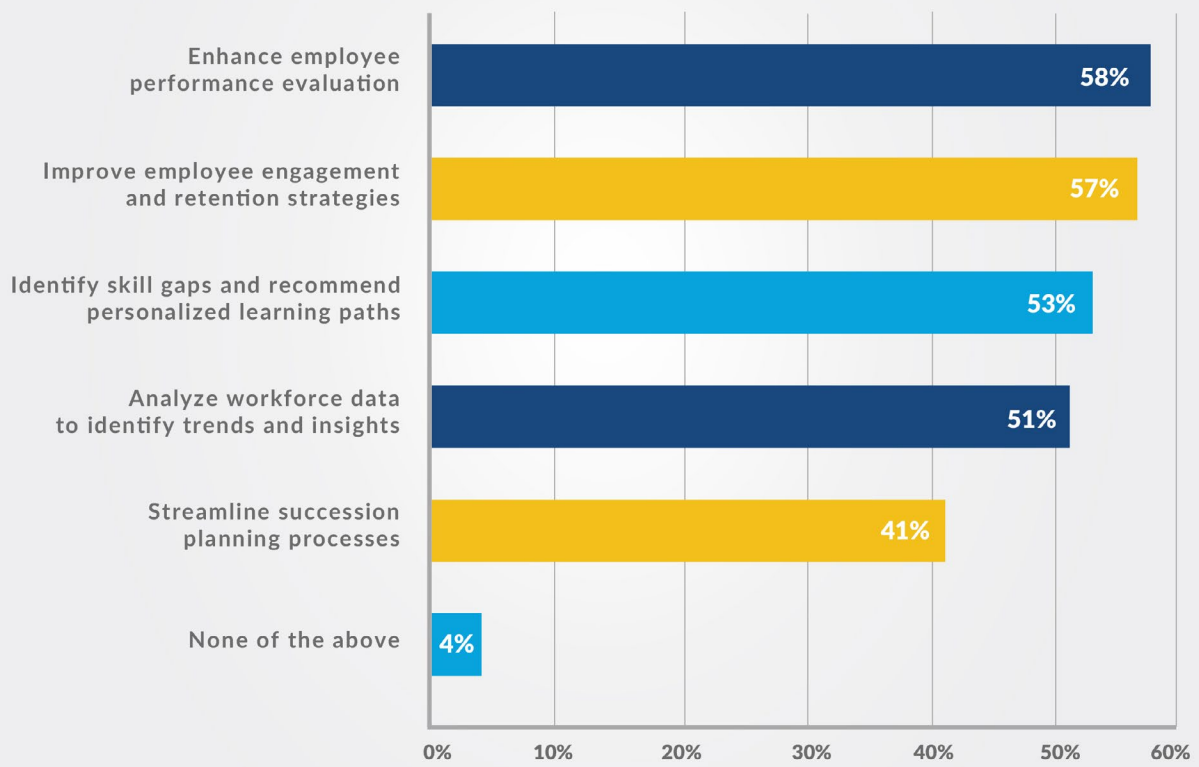
Our leadership is clear on what skills are critical to future organizational success.
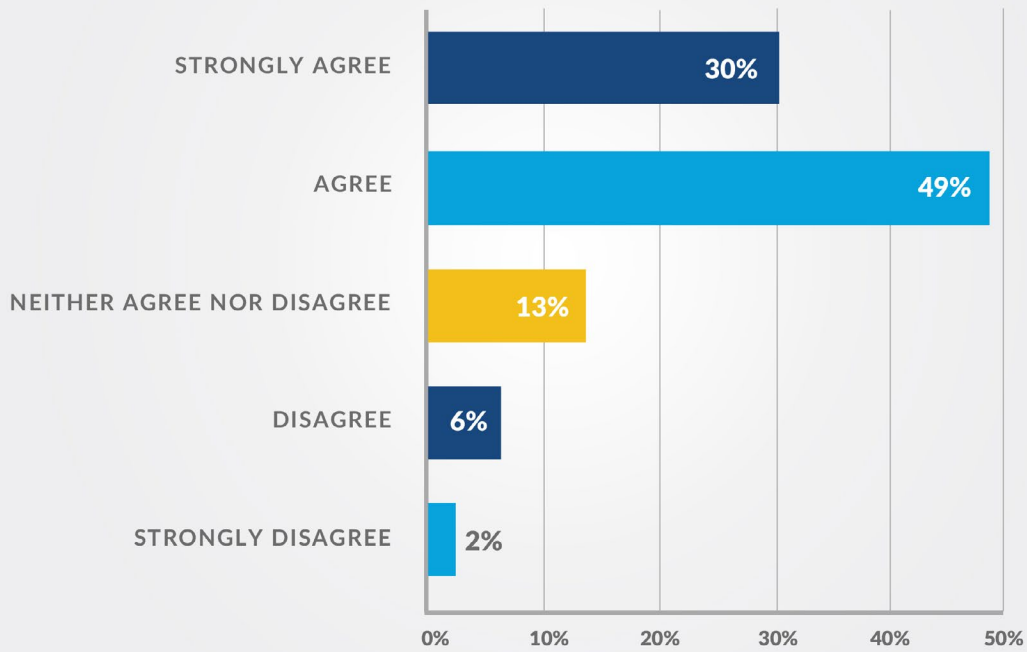
In the past year, our workforce-related technology investments were aligned with the current needs of the organization.

YES 74%
NO 16%
UNSURE 10%
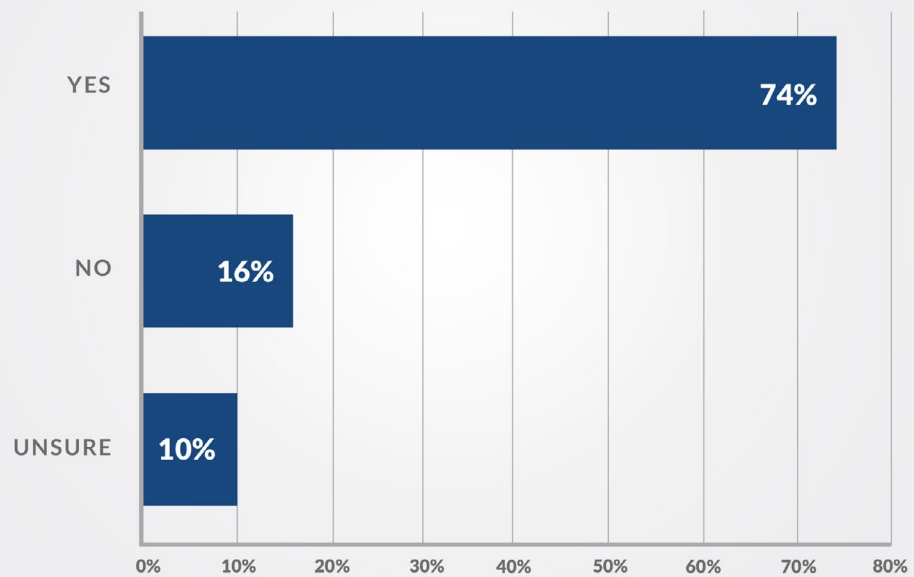
How does your organization use AL/ML (Artificial Intelligence / Machine Learning)?
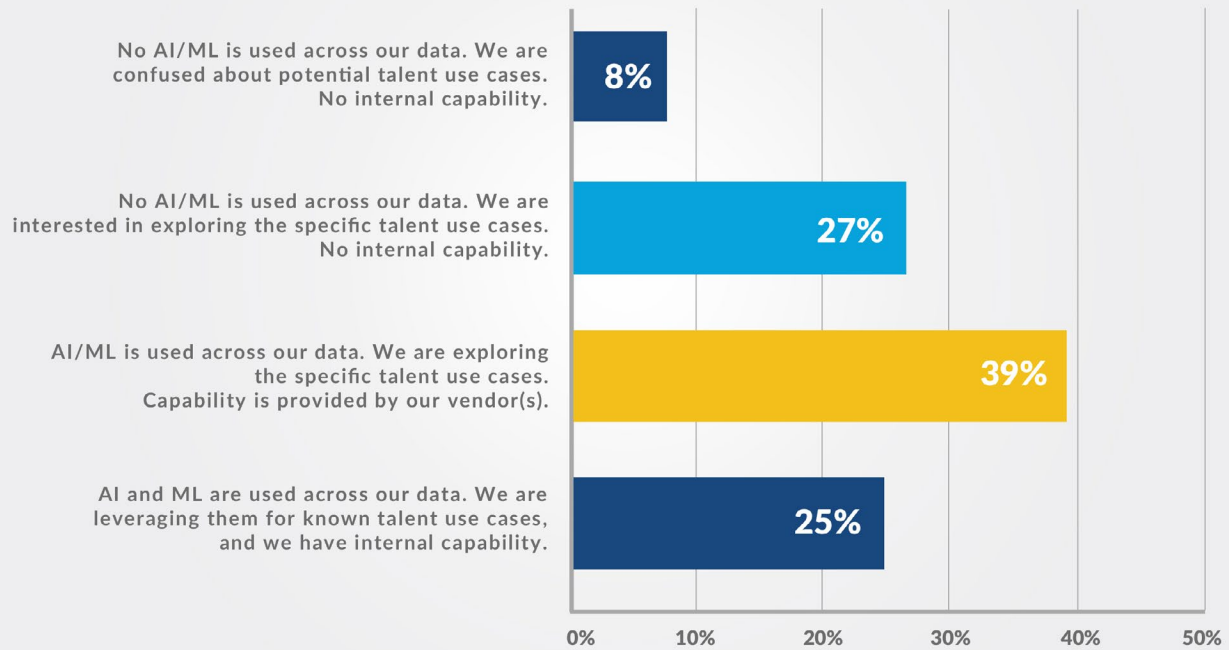
How does your organization identify and handle skill gaps?
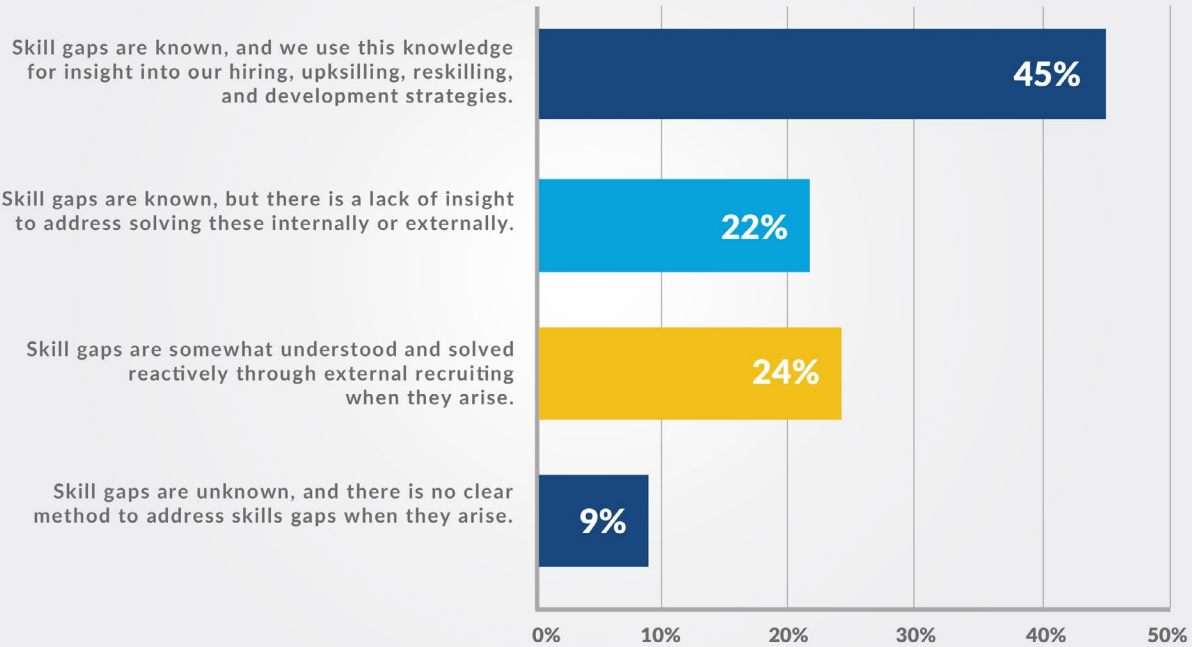
Which of the following is true about a lack of clarity into employee skills?
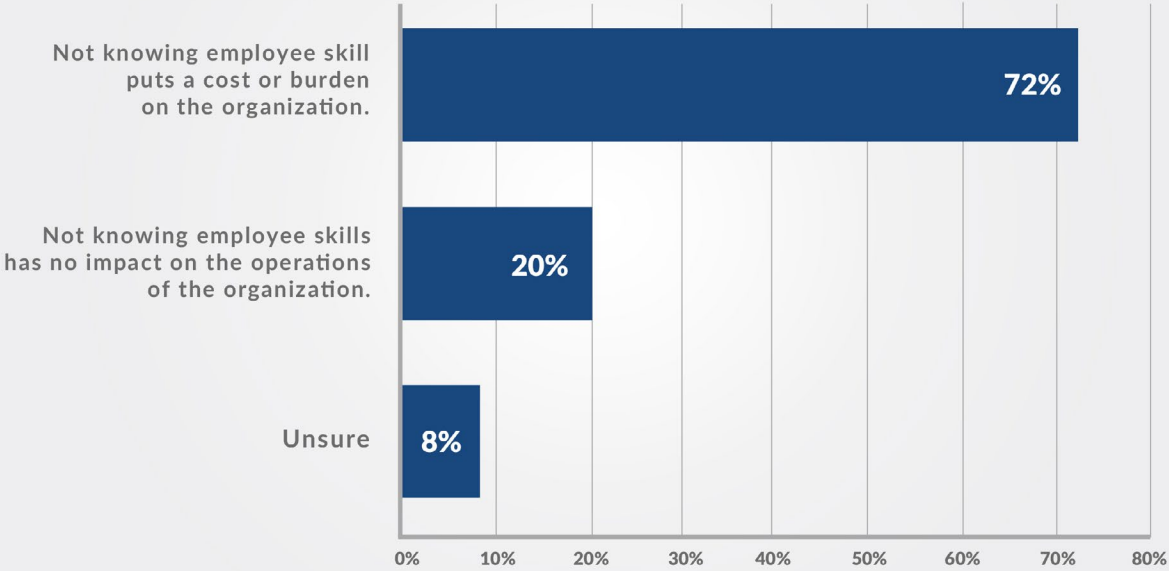
Within your own personal job, how would you rate your organization on career development and growth opportunities?

My company does a great job — 39%

My company does an okay job, but it could be better. — 48%

My company does a poor job. — 13%
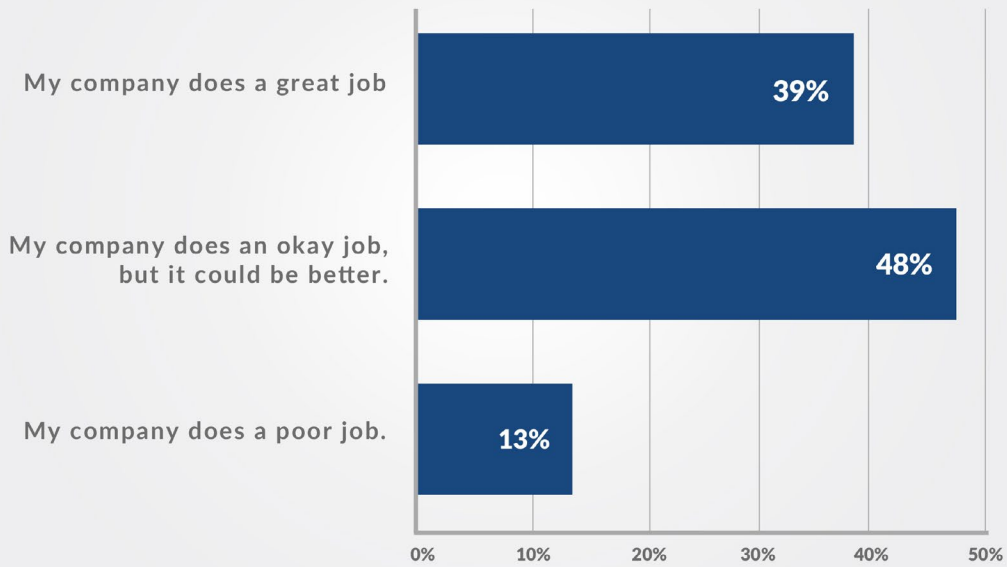
Has your organization examined which workforce skills might be at risk of automation due to AI technology?

We have already done this — 25%

We are in the process of doing this — 59%

We have no plans to do this — 17%
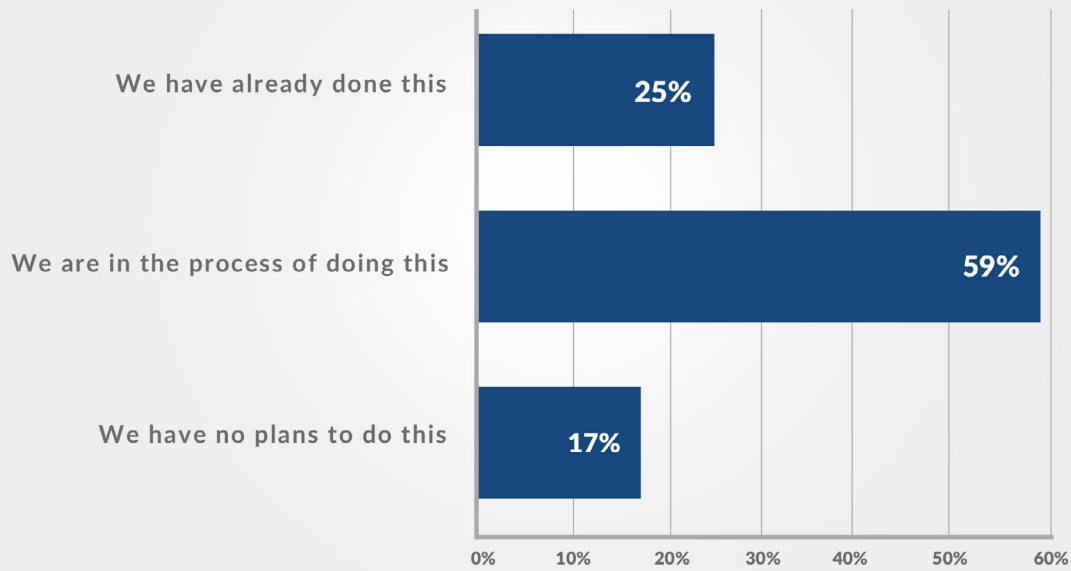
What is the primary reason you have no plans to do this?

We haven't had time — 35%

We don't think automation or AI will change our company's jobs — 47%

We don't know where to start — 18%
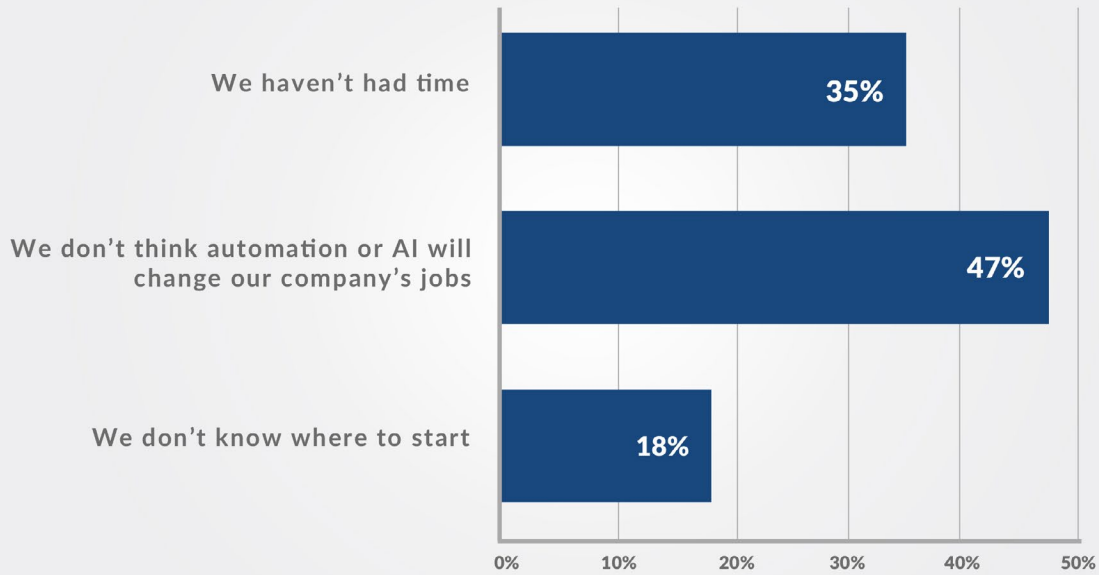
Is the adoption of more AI technology in the workplace affecting any of the following related to the learning and/or HR team?

	Positive effect	No effect	Negative effect	Unsure	N/A
Productivity of the Learning/HR Team	58%	19%	5%	15%	4%
Headcount of the Learning/HR Team	44%	30%	6%	15%	5%
Relevant skill sets of the Learning/HR Team	57%	20%	5%	13%	4%
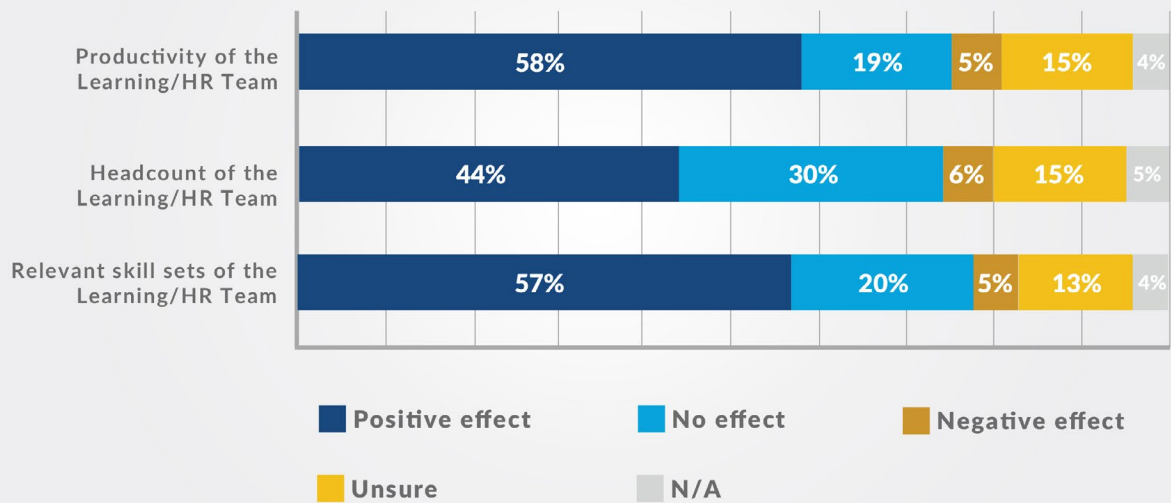
My organization prioritizes skill development and growth for employees within the talent, learning, or HR team.
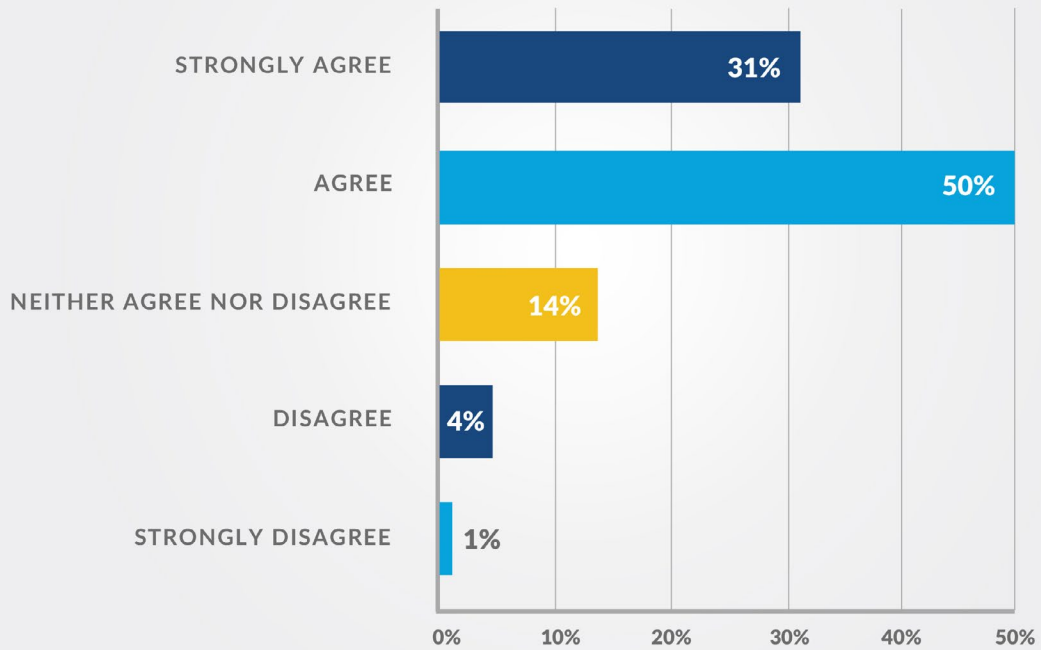
The work environment is moving more quickly than it has in years past.
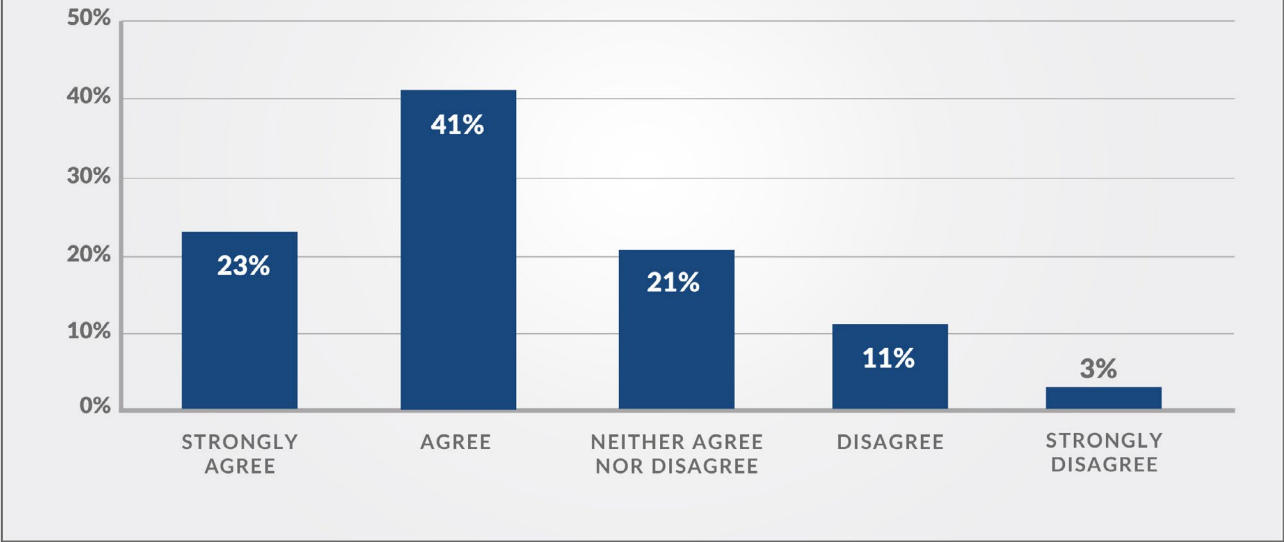
Employee
Charts

My employer invests the appropriate time and resources to make sure me and my fellow employees have the skills we need for future success.

STRONGLY AGREE	16%
AGREE	39%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	20%
DISAGREE	20%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	5%

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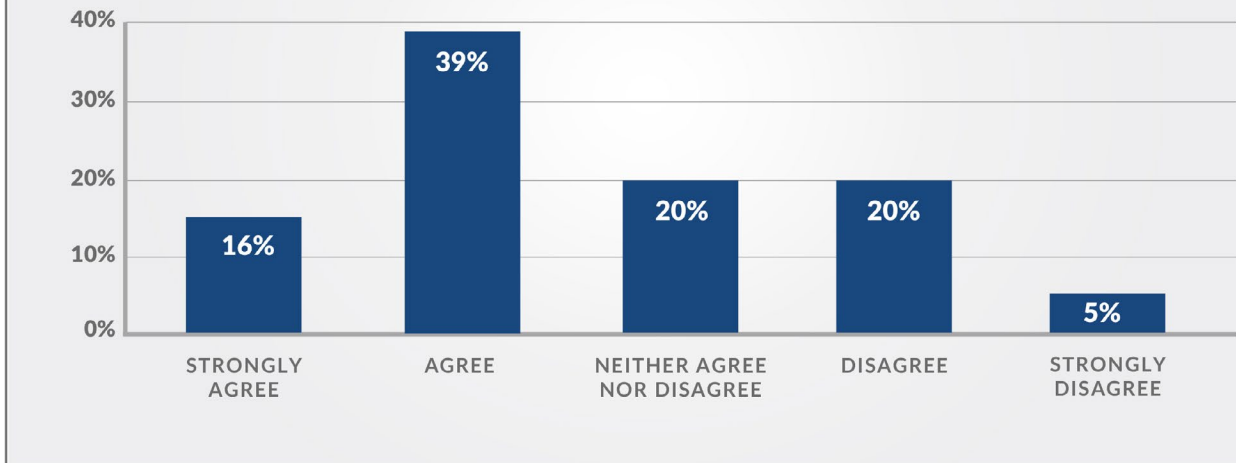
My manager has worked with me to understand my strengths and how those contribute to the company's overall success.

Category	Percentage
STRONGLY AGREE	18%
AGREE	36%
NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	20%
DISAGREE	19%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	6%
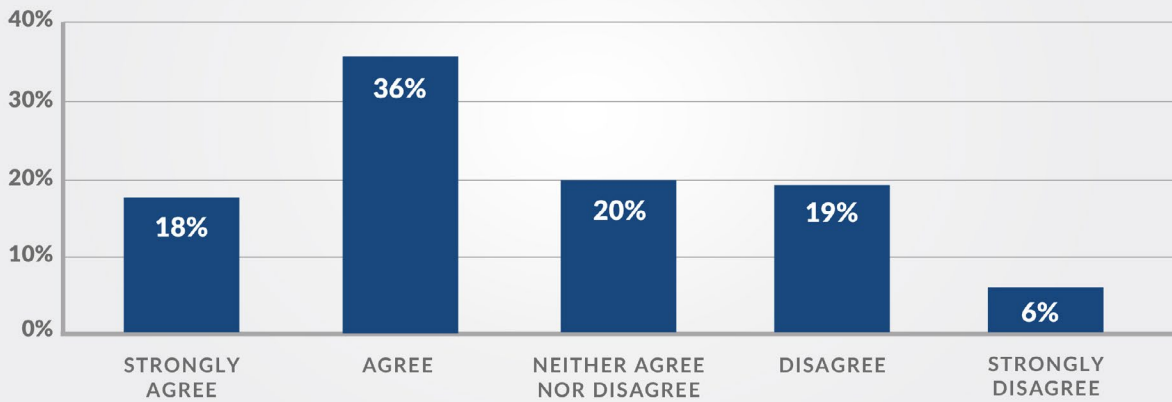
Which of these best describes your employer's culture of learning?
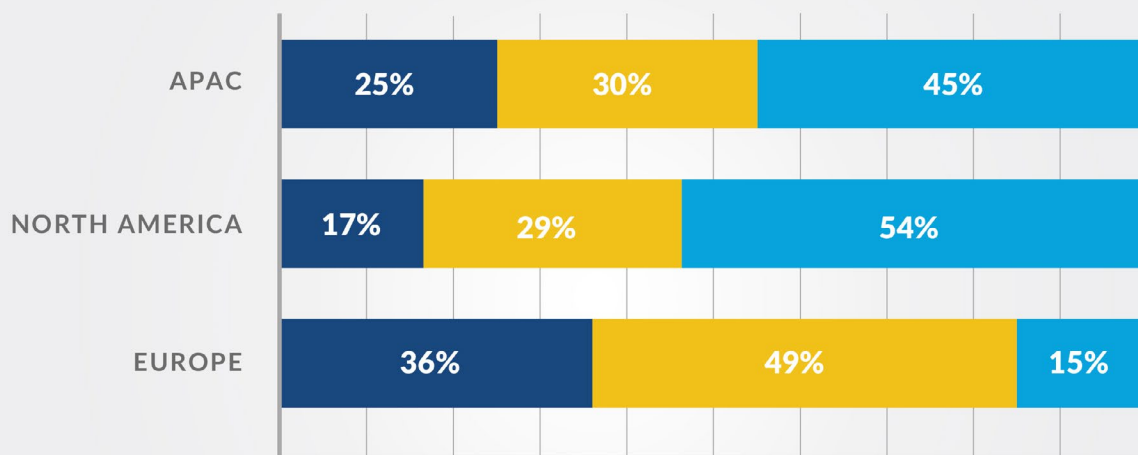
Region	Management doesn't care	Leadership talks but managers don't support	Culture of learning
APAC	25%	30%	45%
NORTH AMERICA	17%	29%	54%
EUROPE	36%	49%	15%

- Management doesn't care about developing employees, they just want to see business results.
- Leadership talks about development and learning but managers do not support growth and/or mobility within the organization.
- We have a culture of learning that promotes skill development and/or career growth.

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The skills I need to succeed at my job today have changed since I originally took the position.
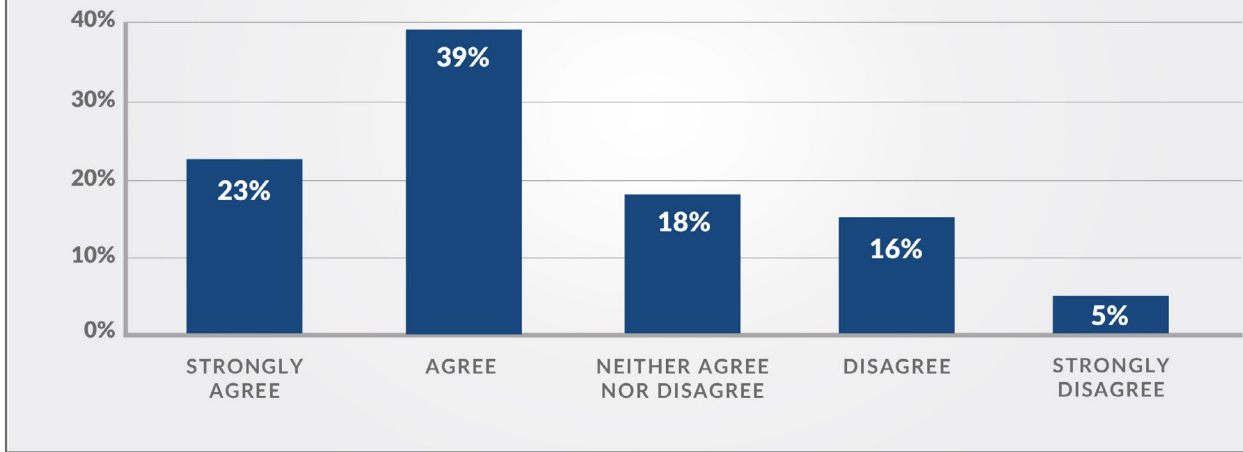
Do you feel like you have the autonomy to build your own career path within your employer?
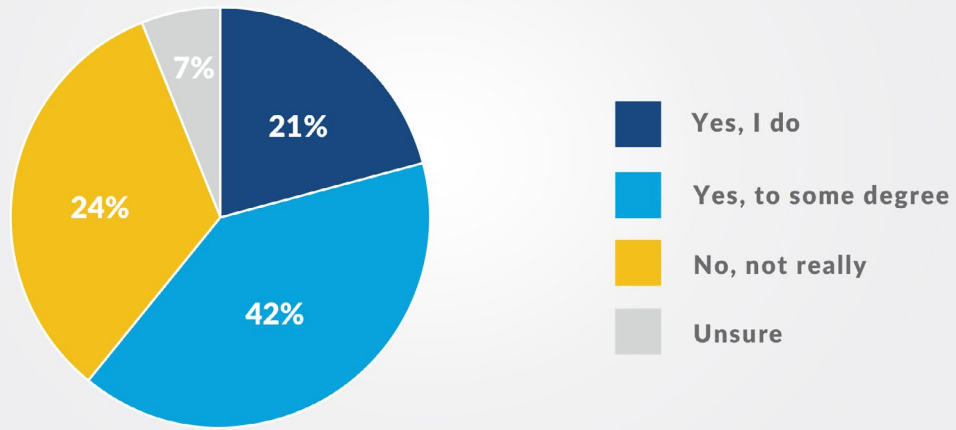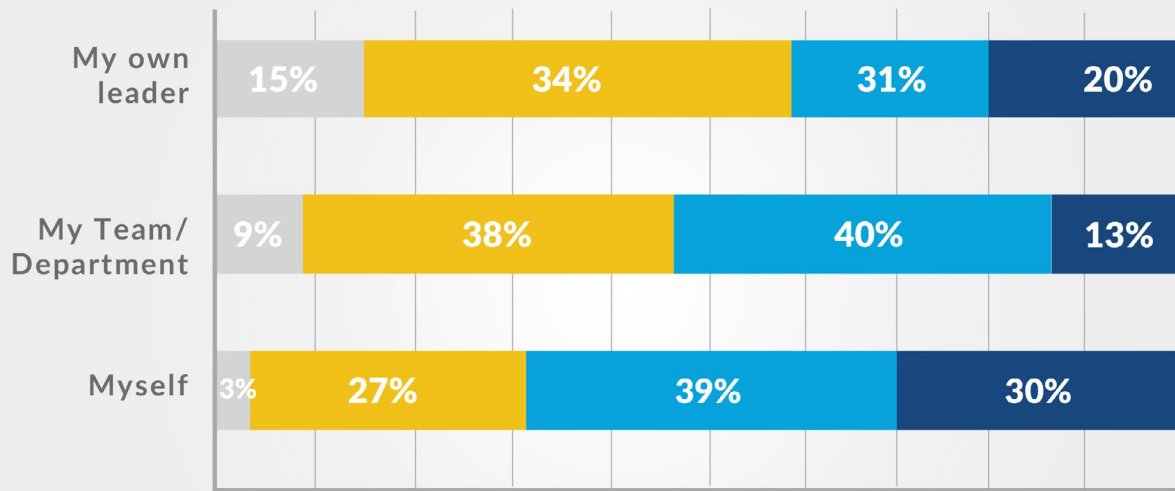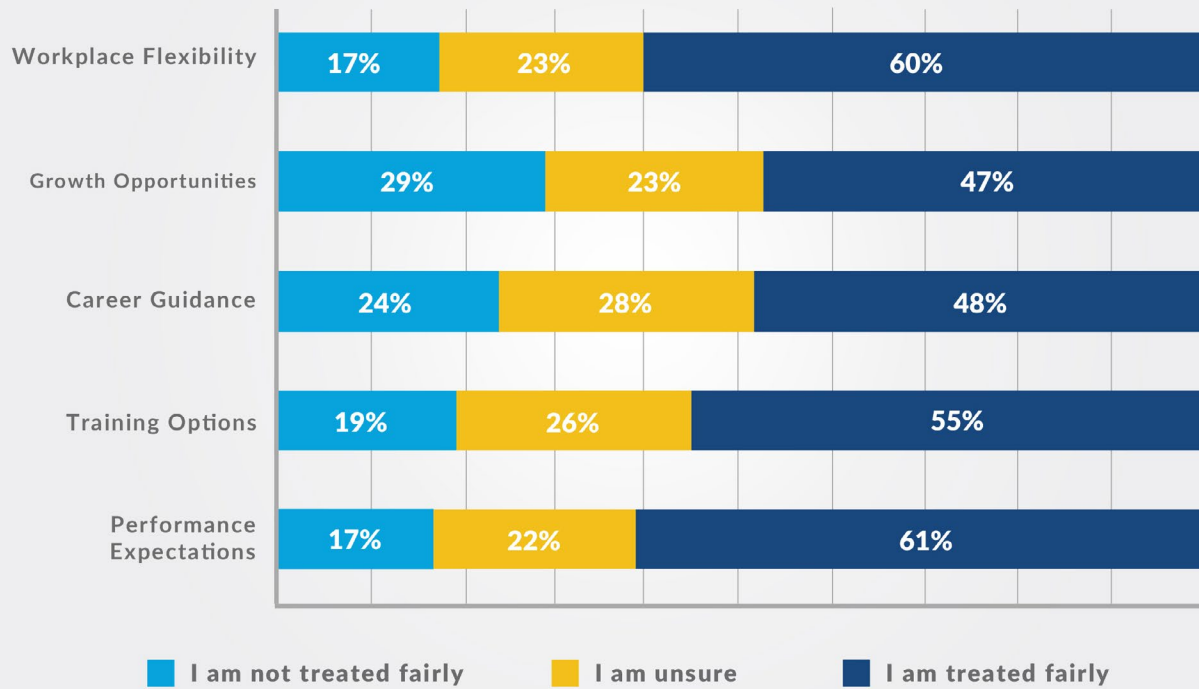
- 21% — Yes, I do
- 42% — Yes, to some degree
- 24% — No, not really
- 7% — Unsure

Do you think hybrid/remote workers have do more learning on their own compared to those working on a physical job site?

Yes — 54%
No — 27%
Unsure — 19%
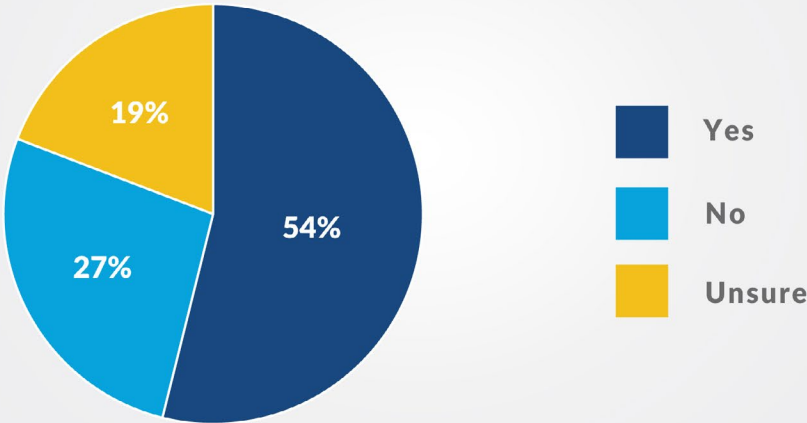
Which of the following methods does your company use to measure your skills?
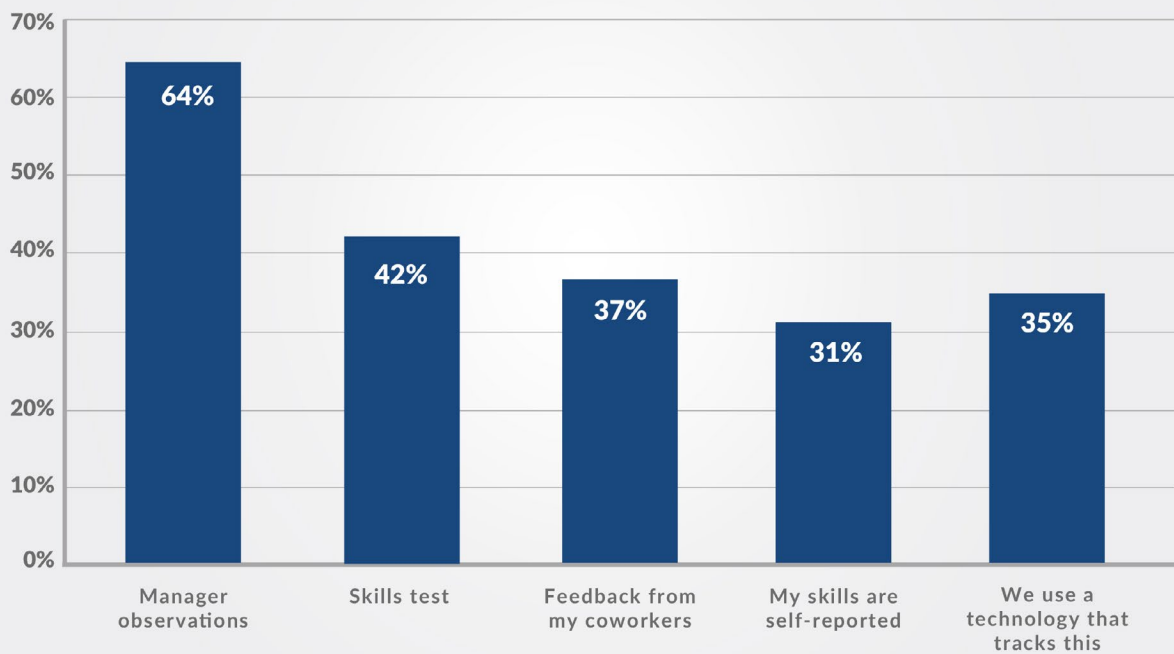
About Lighthouse
Research & Advisory

Lighthouse Research & Advisory is a modern analyst firm dedicated to setting the standard for excellence in talent, learning, and HR. By providing compelling research and actionable insights for business leaders, our team's mission is to navigate the rapidly changing field of human capital management to support today's talent and learning functions.

Our advisory, research, content, events, HR Awards Program, and other offerings serve tens of thousands of employers across the globe every year.

Put simply: our goal is to chart a new course for talent. We do this with compelling research, innovative ideas, and a strong grasp of the current state of talent and technology at work. We have supported hundreds of organizations with our research, advisory, and insights since our beginning in 2016. In addition, our data also inform key product and strategy decisions at the industry's leading technology and service providers.

Ben Eubanks is the Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse, providing trusted advice for today's modern talent leaders. Prior to joining Lighthouse, Ben worked as a research analyst and an executive practitioner. His analyst work focused on learning, talent acquisition, and talent management. During his career, he has published more than 100 pieces of research and provided advisory services to executives from some of the largest and most respected organizations in the world.

Unlike most analysts, he also has hands-on experience working as an HR executive, leading both strategic and tactical talent practices. Ben is the host of We're Only Human, a podcast focused on the intersection of people, technology, and the workplace. In addition, he runs upstartHR.com, a website serving HR leaders that has reached more than 1,000,000 readers since its inception.