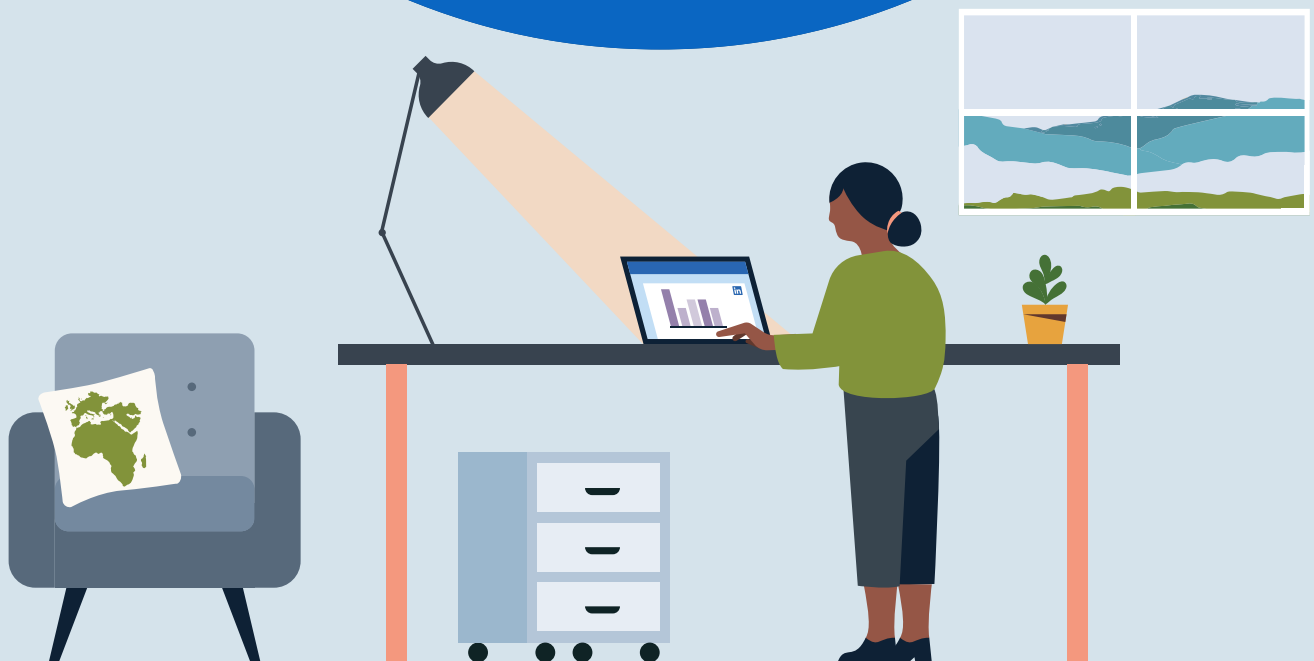


The Handbook of L&D Pioneers

How visionary L&D professionals make
change happen in Europe, Middle East and Africa



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The most effective L&D professionals have one thing in common: they've shifted perceptions of learning from a support function to a leadership priority

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Why now is the time for visionary learning leaders

Introduction

Learning from EMEA's L&D Pioneers



What is it that gives some learning programmes business-wide impact while others struggle to build momentum?

What creates the kind of programmes that build a buzz around learning that employees can't help but engage with? What really turns businesses into learning organisations?

These are crucial questions at a crucial time. Learning is critical to organisations' ability to adapt – and there is more to adapt to than ever: from the accelerating pace of technological change to uncertainty over the terms of international trade. Digital technology is disrupting business models everywhere – and Covid-19 has treated this digital transformation to a course of steroids. Businesses must innovate, build skills and evolve their strategies at a speed never required before.

The role for Learning & Development is obvious – but with budgets of all kinds coming under pressure and employees struggling with new working routines, securing buy-in and funding is a challenge. Making the case for learning matters more than ever. It requires confidence and stepping out of comfort zones – and now is the moment to do it! L&D professionals can't just wait

to be told their role in the strategy. They need to advocate for what the strategy should be.

Learning from the L&D pioneers who've succeeded in transforming their own organisations is a great place to start. We analysed quality engagement with learning at different businesses, and identified the 10% of organisations that have been most successful at embedding a learning culture. We then interviewed the L&D professionals working at those organisations about the strategies that have driven their success. This report reveals what they do differently to sell a vision of learning and then make that vision a reality.

The L&D pioneers that we spoke to aren't just passionate about learning. They are radically inspiring.

committed activists who are also expert influencers, advocates and fundraisers. They excel at communicating with the C-suite. They precisely align learning programmes with business leaders' personal priorities. And they have an approach to demonstrating value that transforms the conversation on ROI.

We've learned from them. We know you can too.



Strategy starts at the very top



L&D Pioneers have one thing in common: their strategies start at the top.

Rather than attempting to drive engagement from the bottom up, they've framed learning as a leadership priority. When the C-suite discusses future strategy, risk management or digital transformation, they ensure that learning is a part of the conversation. And they show leaders that learning can be the most visible benefit to employees of their vision for the business. They go straight to where big questions are asked and big things start to change.

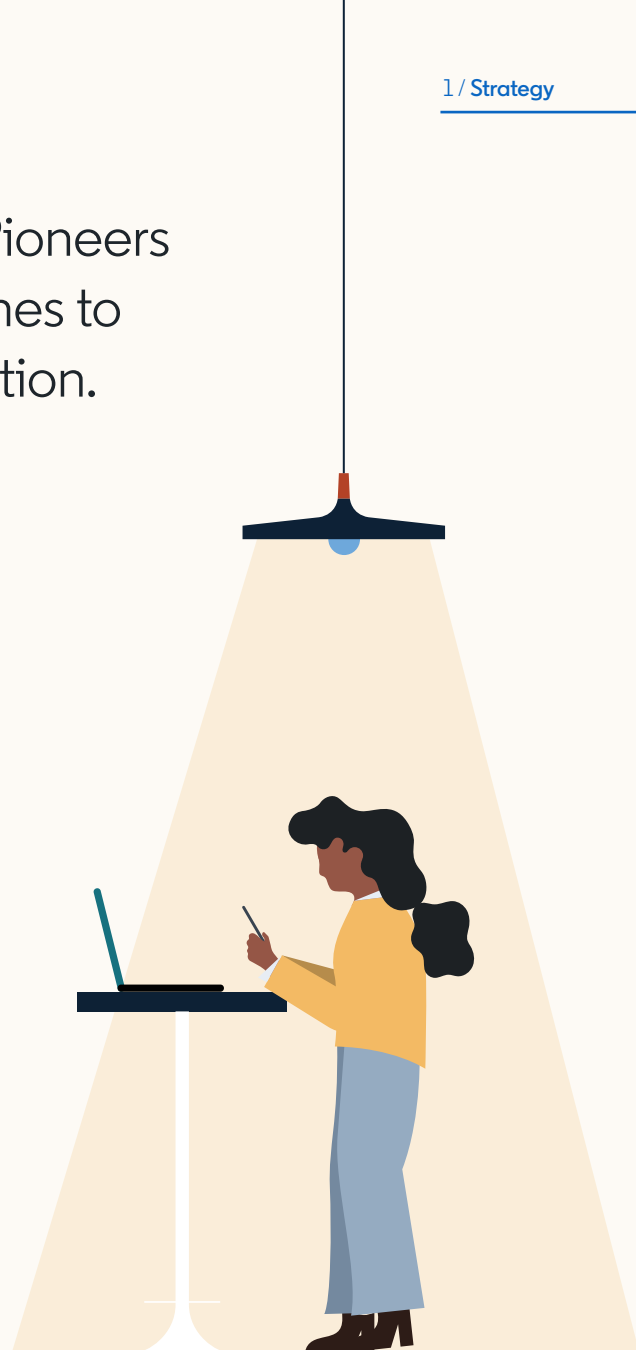
This top-down approach shapes how pioneers secure budget. They demonstrate the links between learning programmes and strategic priorities that already have a well-understood value. Rather than diving into a granular approach of proving ROI, they focus measurement on proving the alignment of learning with the business strategy. This changes the conversation around the value of learning – and puts them on the front foot in budget discussions.

Senior buy-in also provides L&D Pioneers with a valuable asset when it comes to communication and implementation.

C-suite advocates are a shortcut to a learning culture and are in a position to drive learning as a habit through company-wide initiatives. Their support also helps to build relationships at manager level and ensure the collaboration that's essential for getting things done.

In short, learning succeeds when it's seen less as a support function to keep the business running, and more as a leadership function for driving growth and success. However, positioning learning in these terms can feel like a challenge. The C-suite requires different skills and techniques to the learning suite.

In this report, we explain how L&D pioneers have overcome this challenge, pushed beyond their personal passion for learning and become agents for wider change. And we suggest the resources, courses, tactics and tips that can help you do the same.



“We had a new CEO come in 5 years ago who’s kick started a programme of **organisational transformation**. L&D has been a major part of this.”
- Pharma sector, DACH

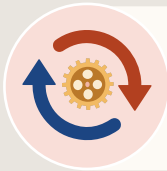
“I make an effort to talk often to the CEO. I know that he is someone who sees a lot of benefit in L&D.” - Professional Services, UK and Ireland



The key characteristics of L&D Pioneers

5

Our research identifies five **consistent characteristics** that help learning pioneers **drive change**, and enable them to secure C-suite buy-in and implement a learning culture:



1 /

Transformation Leaders

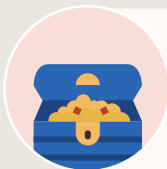
55% have made L&D central to the C-suite's view of change management and digital transformation



2 /

C-suite players

41% meet with the C-suite weekly and **41%** get buy-in direct from the CEO



3 /

Accomplished fundraisers

81% have a ring-fenced annual budget



4 /

Always-on advocates

69% prioritise communicating ROI and the value of L&D to the organisation



5 /

Passionate about implementation

69% work closely with line managers on identifying employee needs and rolling out learning initiatives



Leading on transformation



Cement learning as
the key element in
managing change
and enabling digital
transformation

Anticipating and managing change has always been a vital part of leadership.

Businesses were already playing catch-up with the pace of technology, struggling to secure the skills they need to stay competitive – and provide the services their customers expect. The arrival of Covid-19 leaves them feeling like long-suffering athlete, who finally gets within reach of the leaders just to see them accelerate away again off the final bend. Businesses have invested in new technologies. Now they must adapt to new forms of demand and find new markets while reinventing the fundamentals of how they operate. Manufacturing companies have spent the last four years strengthening relationships in Europe

in anticipation of Brexit. Now they must find a way to do so without the face-to-face meetings and international trade shows they depend on. This requires a wholly different set of skills, including data analysis, video content and production, and virtual events.

Our L&D pioneers have recognised the opportunity to cement learning as the key element in managing change and enabling digital transformation. They communicate about learning in a vocabulary that relates directly to the business strategy:

55%

have made **L&D central** to the **C-suite's view** of change management and digital transformation

65%

focus a substantial share of **L&D budgets on upskilling or reskilling** existing employees

58%

give a **substantial share** to **digital transformation** initiatives

This aligns with the budget priorities of the business, with **68% reporting that digital transformation is a budget priority**



Prioritising transformation initiatives brings a number of important advantages. It opens up budgets and helps build relationships with senior department leaders who have specific skills gaps they need to close. It provides a route to quantifying the value of learning by measuring

completions of relevant courses and engagement in relevant areas. And change builds its own momentum. Upskilling and reskilling employees creates more momentum for transformation – and a greater demand for learning from people who have already felt the benefit.

“

I believe in L&D. It's my passion because you can transform whole organisations with it.” - Technology, DACH

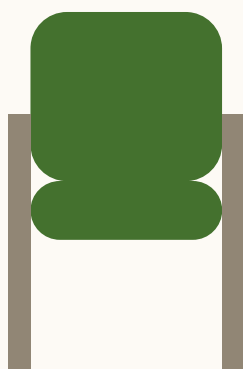
“We want to become the UK's n° 1 digital bank – so **we need to grow learning at exponential speed** to achieve that ambition.” - Financial Services, UK

”

Stories of change:

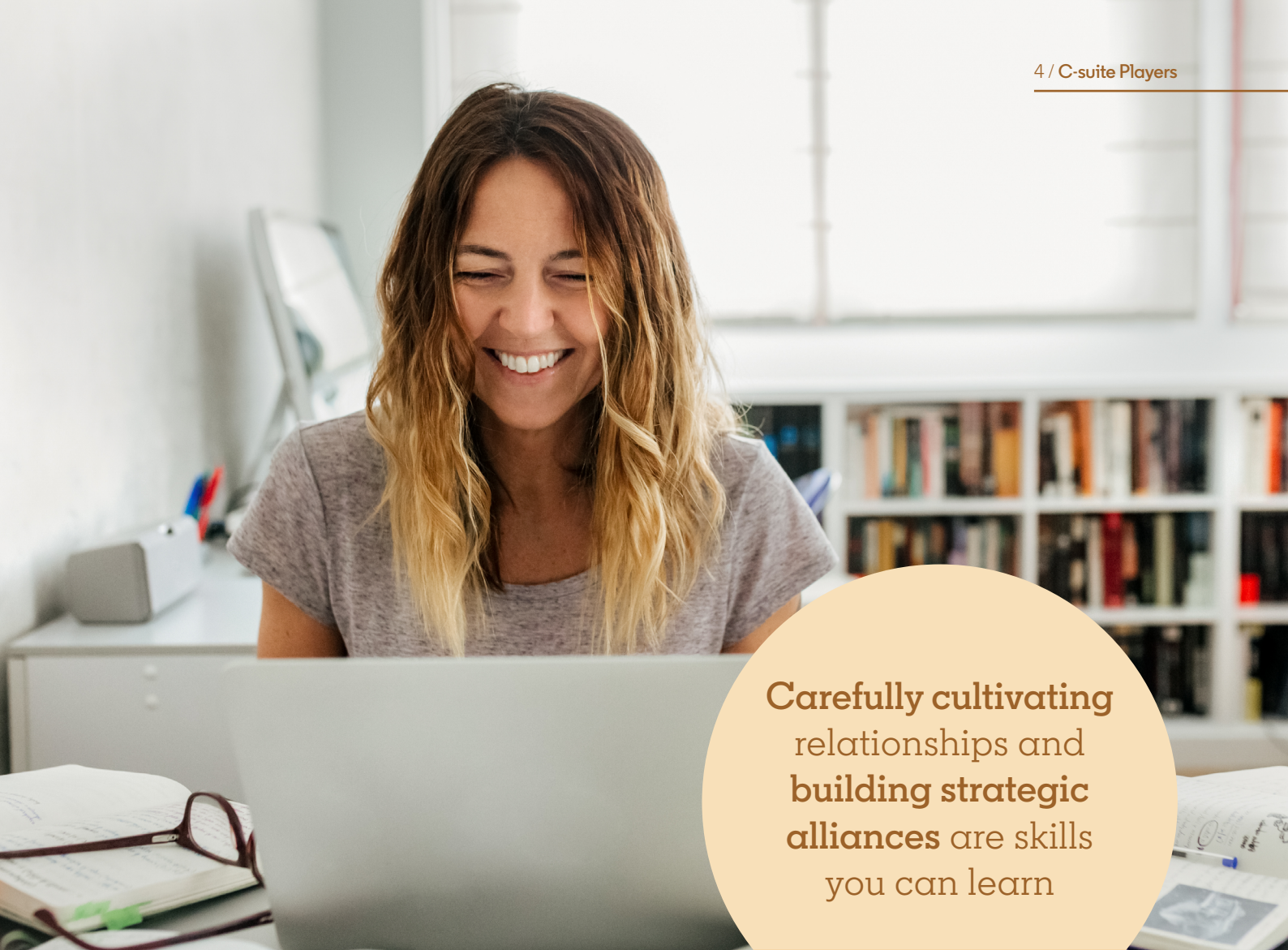
Ascensia Diabetes Care

Disruption to its traditional business model, with sales teams no longer able to visit doctors face-to-face, proved a trigger to learning for Ascensia. The business provided every employee with unlimited access to LinkedIn Learning, rolled out a Learning a Day company-wide campaign, established a network of learning champions and integrated learning with skills development for senior managers. **This drove an 83% activation rate with more than 140,000 learning videos watched.**





Becoming a C-suite player



Carefully cultivating relationships and **building strategic alliances** are skills you can learn

Many L&D professionals didn't choose their career because they wanted to become a power player in the boardroom.

They didn't envisage mastering the art of dropping into the CEO's office or virtual Zoom room at the right moment, carefully cultivating relationships or building strategic alliances.

However, these are the skills that put together coalitions for change. They're skills that you can learn – and the experience of our L&D pioneers shows the value in learning them.



1 in 2

L&D top performers say the **C-suite are** the stakeholders they work most closely with

43% work with the **CHRO** to get L&D buy-in

41% work directly with the **CEO**

41% Meet with the **C-suite every week**

Every C-suite is different, and the strategies that L&D advocates follow vary according to the make-up and personalities of their senior teams. In many cases, a senior HR leader such as the CHRO plays the part of L&D champion, introducing them to C-suite colleagues and setting the context for learning's importance. However, in almost as many cases our top performers have succeeded in forming direct relationships with the CEO. Building influence at

C-suite level involves multi-threading: establishing a network of supportive relationships rather than depending on just one. Heads of functions with particular skills gaps to close are a great source of senior learning advocates.

Building influence at C-suite level involves multi-threading: **establishing a network of supportive relationships** rather than depending on just one.

“You have to **identify the key executive stakeholders** and get them on your side. It's really important that you identify who your cheerleaders might be.”
- FinTech sector, UK and Ireland

“I have no direct contact with the CEO but I do have the ear of Chief People Officer, who in turn has the ear of the CEO.” - FinTech sector, UK and Ireland

C-suite influence strategies also vary with the point a business has reached in its growth cycle.

Enterprise-level organisations with keenly felt transformation needs often have a range of senior learning advocates that L&D leaders can cultivate. In smaller businesses on a steep growth trajectory, the opportunity is to cultivate a direct relationship with the CEO from the start. However, across all of these different scenarios, there are several techniques that top L&D performers consistently apply:

1 Know the audience

It's important to align L&D with the overall business strategy. However, L&D pioneers go further. They go out of their way to learn about the CEO's personal priorities and passion projects, and demonstrate the contribution that learning can make to delivering them.

2 Speak C-suite

The C-suite is time-poor by definition. They measure the value of ideas not necessarily by how much detail you include, but by how quickly they can grasp them. Keep idea pitches brief, top-level and framed in priorities, performance or profits.

3 Don't forget the CFO

CFOs are crucial senior allies who are often neglected by L&D professionals. Stay alive to

moments when learning can support the finance team directly with skills development or new technology. And capitalise on any opportunity to demonstrate how learning contributes to initiatives with a definite impact on the bottom line. Cultivating the CFO doesn't just build a crucial relationship with the person signing off budgets, it's also a clear signal to the business as a whole that L&D is taken seriously.

4 Cultivate C-level functional partners

Any team or department that increases its engagement with learning and development can be an opportunity to secure C-suite influence. Aim to elevate your relationship within that team to a senior level. Every skills gap that you help to close is an opportunity to recruit another senior advocate. Capture success stories and give a key role to department heads when promoting them across the business.

5 Be the visible C-suite priority

Learning can be the most visible aspect of business strategy – which incentivises CEOs to lead from the front. Take the time to involve your CEO in flagship learning initiatives, working with them on course recommendations and helping them to create content.

Stories of change:

Allianz Technology

Allianz Technology's Learning for a Good Cause initiative linked a three-month, Group-wide learning initiative to causes that resonated at C-suite level, with the company donating €1 to environmental causes for every hour that an employee spent learning. The CEO became the visible face of the campaign, promoting it in blog posts and having lunch with the employee making most learning progress as the flagship prize. **The campaign smashed all targets, with the CFO quick to approve for the following year.**





Fundraising strategies



Top performers are **meticulous planners** who build their learning budgets **from several different sources**

Top L&D performers are accomplished fundraisers, with 81% deploying a ring-fenced annual budget that increases slightly year-on-year.

They earn these budgets through their success in cultivating C-suite relationships and aligning learning with the key strategic priorities, but also through their attention to detail.

Top performers are meticulous planners who build their learning budgets from several different sources. They stay up to speed on what's happening in different teams and different regions,

and identify where L&D can deploy a share of the funds allocated to wider local initiatives. They map how their planned learning initiatives contribute to agreed business priorities – and therefore, where there is additional budget available. They secure ongoing funding from these sources through measuring the extent to which learning contributes to these objectives.

Crucially, L&D pioneers have focused on establishing the wider value of learning first, which changes the conversation on ROI. Their business cases focus on how learning will support initiatives that already have a recognised value, rather than on trying to prove a direct contribution to the bottom line from learning itself. This enables them to deploy their budgets strategically, and avoid being held up trying to prove the value of every item of spend.

Their business cases focus on **how learning will support initiatives** that already have a recognised value, **rather than on trying to prove a direct contribution** to the bottom line from learning itself.



“If what we do fits with company-wide goals it is likely to be approved as L&D has great importance and steer within the business.” - Construction, UK and Ireland

“We measure success through internal learner assessments for each piece of content on the platform and surveys sent out to each learner after they have completed a course. We also assess content in line with department needs and objectives. - NGO, DACH

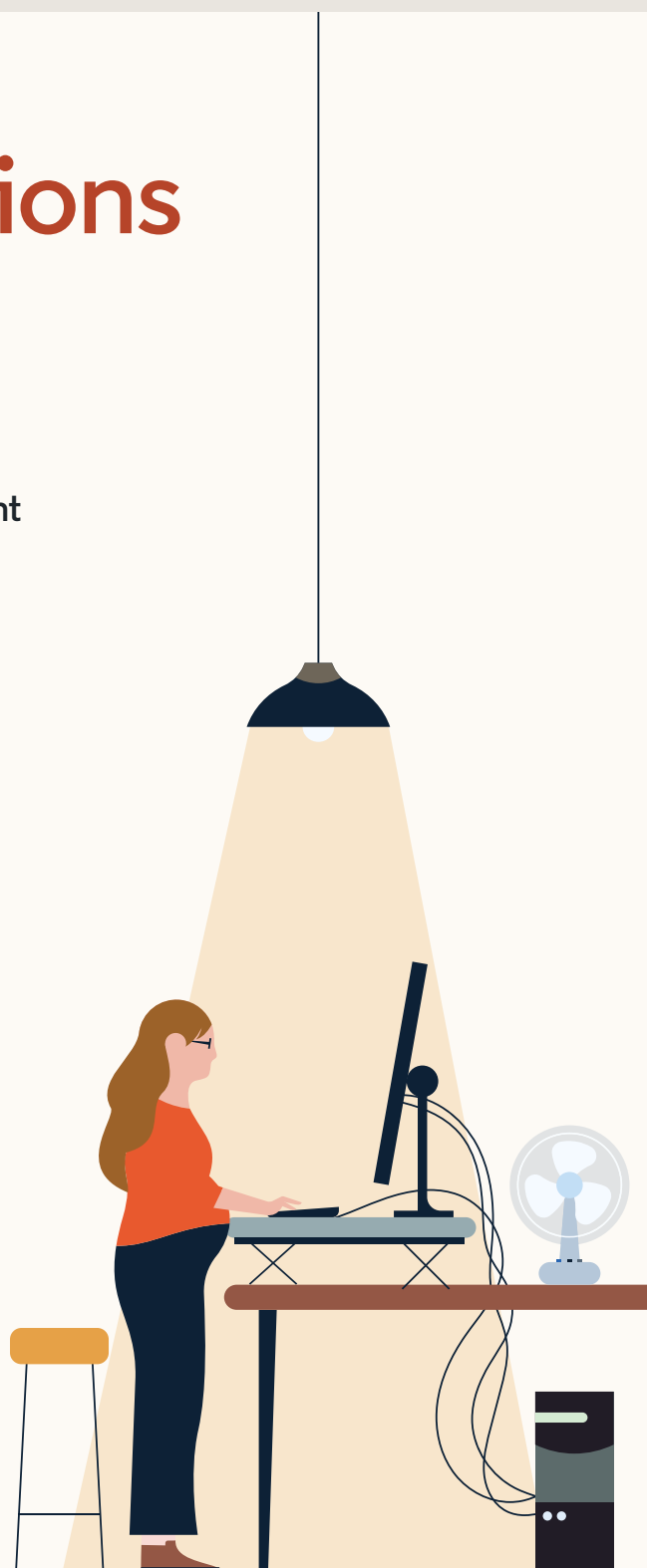
Stories of change:

Car Benefit Solutions

Car Benefit Solutions provides **unlimited access to LinkedIn Learning** and an hour a week for employees to spend on the courses of their choice – but also carefully **promotes and tracks engagement with priority skills courses** like PowerBI.

Atlas Copco

The global industrial company build the business case for its group-wide deployment of LinkedIn Learning through a series of regional and divisional learning campaigns that were tailored to local needs and priorities. **The L&D team also linked learning to agreed strategic priorities** with playlists for each of the five themes in the organisation's competency framework.





Always-on advocates



They are engaged in a **permanent campaign** to demonstrate how learning contributes to the business – **and to individuals' careers**

It goes without saying that L&D professionals are passionate about the value of learning.

The trap they can sometimes fall into is assuming that the rest of their organisation sees that value in the same way. Top performers do things differently. They are engaged in a permanent campaign to demonstrate how learning contributes to the business – and to individuals' careers. This helps them secure budget at senior level – and build the relationships with different functions that are essential for rolling out programmes and driving employee engagement.

1 in 2

demonstrate how
learning drives **adoption**
of desired behaviours

1 in 2

have attached an ROI
figure to L&D

69% prioritise communicating
ROI and the value of
L&D to the organisation

76% track positive sentiment
in employee surveys

63% measure the number of
Engaged Quality Learners

77% have quantitative KPIs
for learning



“I have worked hard at persuading people that items such
as **feedback are valuable measures** too.” - Publishing, DACH

“We’ve organised training for one-on-one conversations for line managers.
They need to understand that conversations with their staff should not be
about how many sales have you made but about **what can I do for you to
make you more successful.**” - Technology, DACH

“I work closely with line managers to get **assessments of needs**
and also for **reporting on achievements.**” - FinTech, UK and Ireland

Stories of change:

IHS Markit

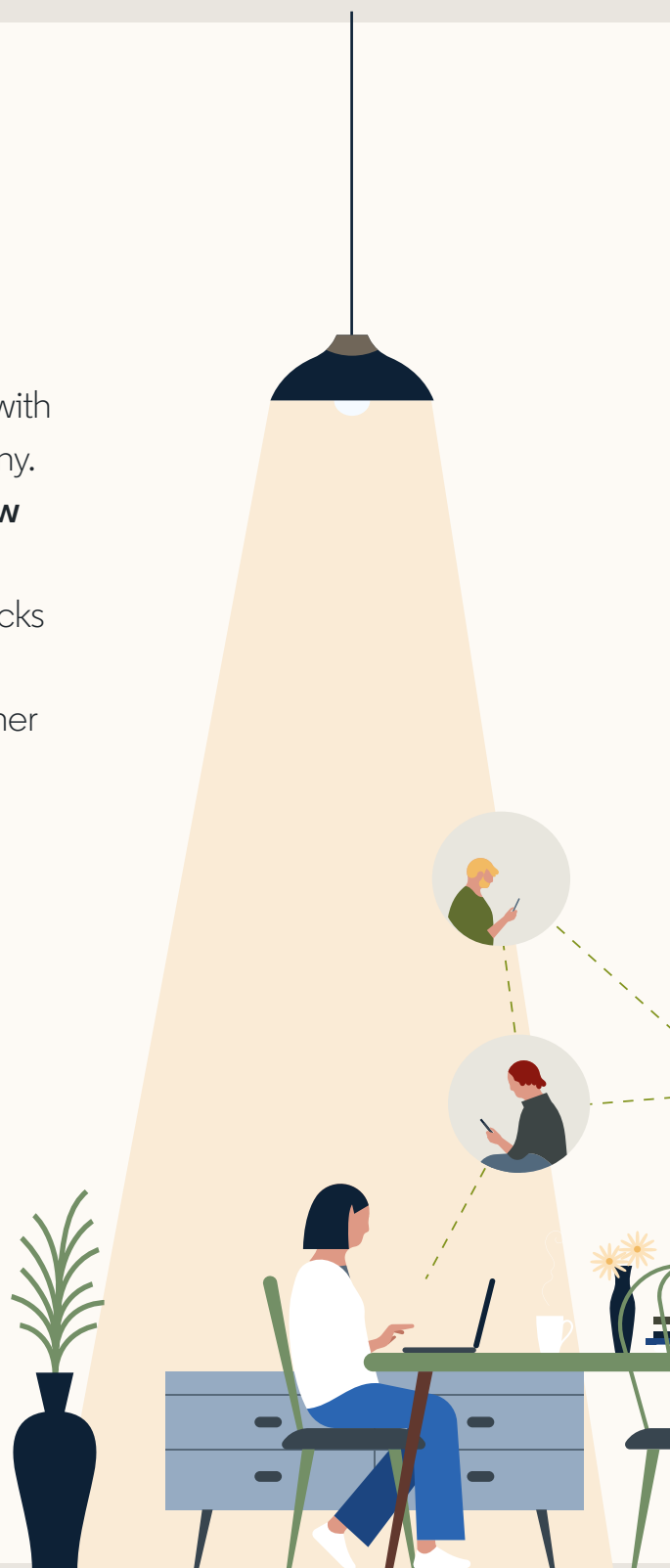
The launch of The Academy, a Netflix-style on-demand learning hub, transformed engagement with learning content at the global intelligence company.

It also provided an opportunity to transform how the impact of learning was measured.

The L&D team developed an Academy dashboard that tracks the quality of learning, used Glint surveys to track employees' awareness levels and developed learner personas that could inform the strategy.

LEGO

LEGO'S L&D Pioneer, Johannes Lystbæk has used insights from LinkedIn Learning courses to help him build a Learning at Lego brand. His always-on learning campaign uses digital posters and iconic LEGO characters to highlight priority topics that align with the business strategy of increased agility.





Implementing like you mean it



Success comes from a range of **different tactics** and **techniques**

L&D pioneers are comfortable operating in a senior, strategic environment.

However, they are also adept at orchestrating change across all levels of an organisation. Their business cases and C-suite influence are built on successful implementation.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementation. Success tends to come from a range of different tactics and techniques, and changemakers often draw inspiration from the way that employees engage in their personal lives.

They bring together the experiences of gaming, book clubs and meeting with friends to generate momentum that is apparent to all:



Integrated learning

A key cultural shift involves positioning learning as an integral part of the job that employees do, rather than an add-on that they need to find time for. C-suite initiatives like allocated learning time can help. However, cultivating line manager relationships is also crucial to establishing support for learning at all levels. That's why 69% of top performers work closely with line managers on identifying employee needs and rolling out learning initiatives.

“DEAL means Drop Everything and Learn. Employees have a designated time once a week and they can use those hours to up their skills.”

- Publishing, DACH



Self-directed learning

Our study identifies a definite move away from top-down, mandated learning towards self-directed learning cultures where employees are encouraged to take control of their own career development. Many have adopted a mixed model, with L&D pioneers and managers providing guidance on learning paths, but also allowing space for employees to pursue their own passions and interests. Innovative marketing can play a key role here, raising awareness of learning opportunities and the career benefits.

“You'll never be successful if the employee does not want to take part in a programme. I don't believe in enforced learning.”

- Technology, DACH

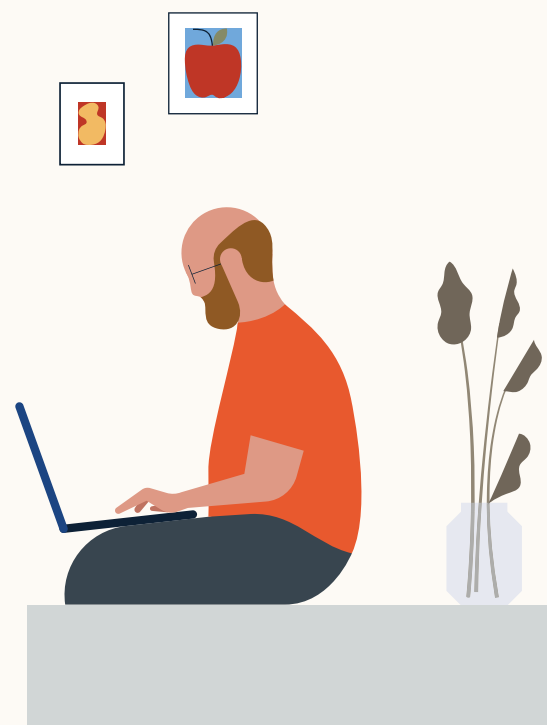


High-quality, short-form learning

A greater role for self-directed learning in L&D strategies is made possible by the range of accessible, short-form yet high-quality learning content now available. Virtually all (97%) of top performers have invested in online learning over the last 12 months, with 63% saying online learning represents their largest L&D investment. Virtual instructor-led training is also on the rise. This is in part a response to the pandemic, but also part of a wider focus on making all types of learning experience more accessible to employees on their own terms.

“We broke down some training that we thought people weren't retaining, and then we developed micro-training modules of 80 or so elements and made them available on-demand.”

- FinTech, UK and Ireland





Social learning experiences

L&D pioneers have embraced online and self-directed learning – but they’ve been careful to balance this by encouraging social experiences that help to increase engagement, embed learning within teams, and apply it to the day-to-day. Social learning can take the form of discussion groups, team leaders developing learning paths for their teams, or a network of learning champions doing the same for the business as a whole.

“We encourage groups to meet regularly to share all their learning experiences. For us, it is about building learning networks.”

- Financial Services, DACH

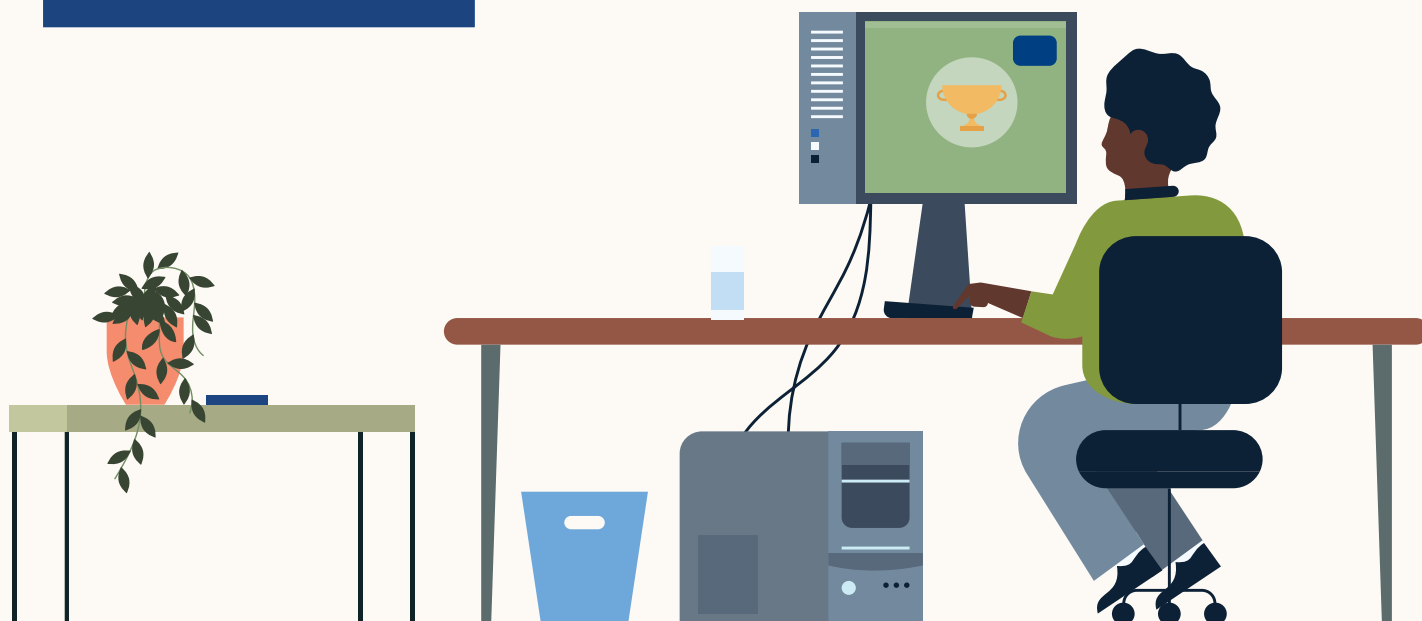


Gamification

Gamifying learning engagement is an emerging trend that incorporates league tables, annual competitions and prizes for top learners. It’s most effective when supported by strong buy-in at director and manager level, with team leaders taking an active role in driving their colleagues’ performance.

“We have gone all 007. Managers up to board level need to earn their Licence to Lead. There is a fun element, and also we compile league tables to encourage competition.”

- Accounting Technology, UK and Ireland



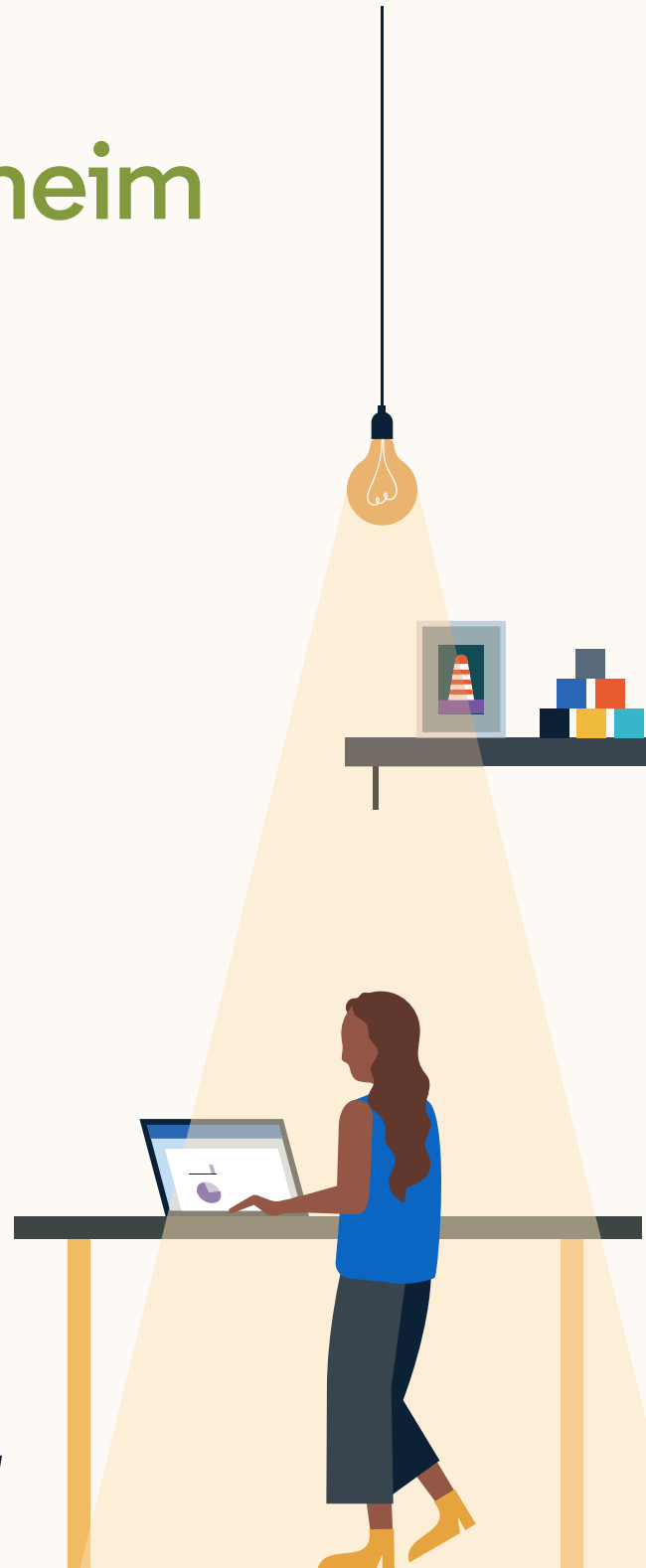
Stories of change:

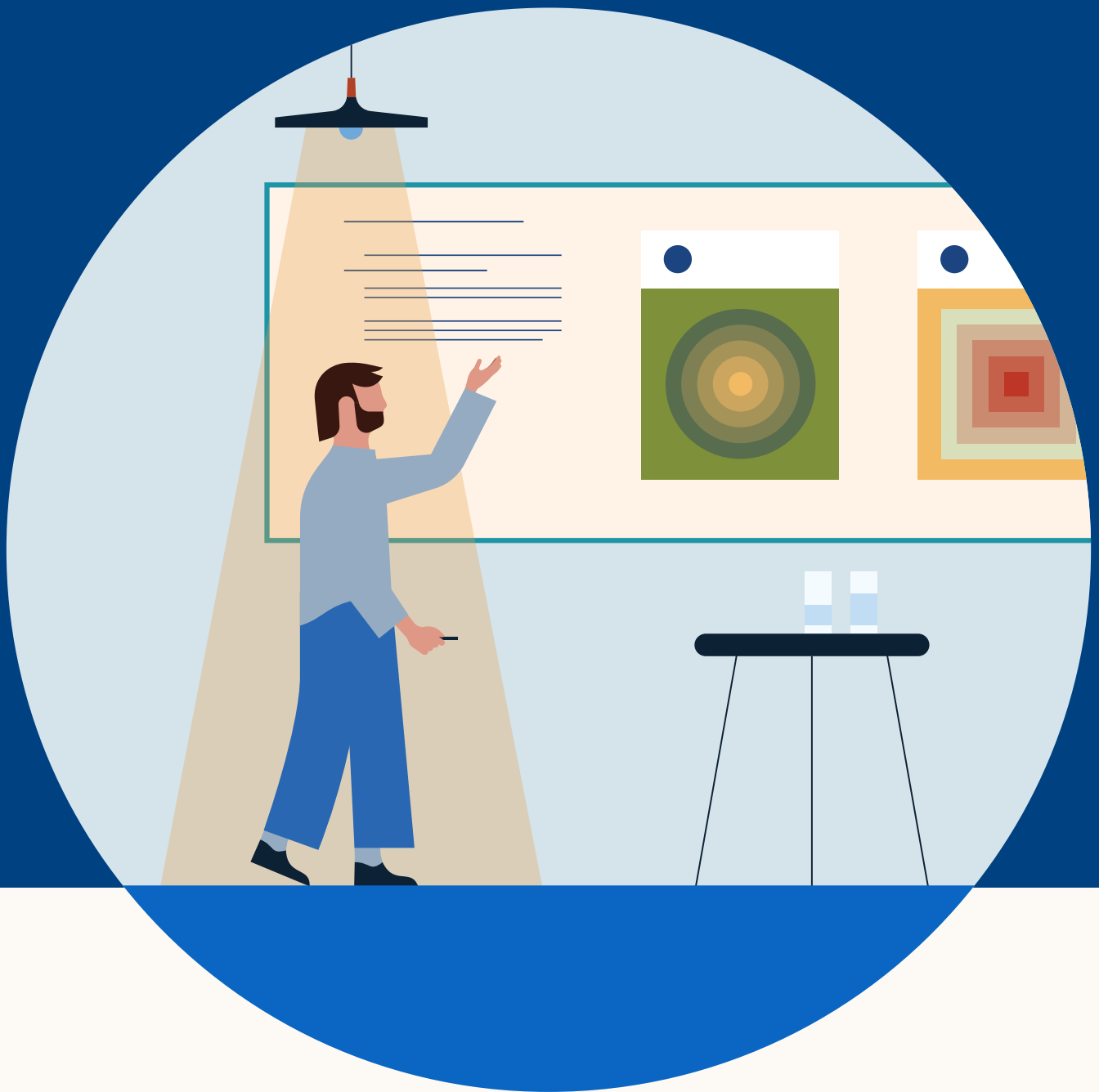
Boehringer Ingelheim

Local managers for the global pharmaceuticals business developed learning paths on LinkedIn Learning that were tailored to the circumstances and priorities of their individual countries. This complemented strategic, company-wide learning campaigns around priorities like **agile working and data-driven decision-making**.

Mumsnet

Mumsnet instituted a **fortnightly learning hour**, when every employee sets aside their work to consume LinkedIn Learning content of their choice. It's become the centrepiece for Mumsnet's learning culture – leading naturally into a follow-up social event where employees discuss what they've learned.





Seizing the moment



Learning can all too easily suffer from an inferiority complex: does it really contribute to growth?

Can its contribution ever be measured? As a cost centre, does it just need to wait for budget handouts when they're available? Is it a luxury or a perk?

As L&D professionals, it's time to call a stop – and recognise that these questions are no longer valid. Because the chances are, senior leaders in your organisation have already stopped asking them. The value of human potential, human development and a broad range of human skills has never been more apparent – within the workplace and within society as a whole. CEOs are no longer asking whether they need to invest in their people. They are urgently asking how

they need to do it, what they should prioritise and where the experts are that can guide them.

This handbook is a guide to ensuring they don't have to look very far. It's a guide to stepping up, grabbing the spotlight and taking strategic, change-making role that your organisation requires of you.

We hope you've found it as inspiring as we have.



“This is the time to ask those big questions and disrupt and create change – and to disrupt and pioneer and take risks, you need to have that confidence.

You need to have that swagger saying, *“I know my function and I can make that difference.”* That is why my biggest advice is: Lead! Don’t wait for someone else to tell you to lead. Lead! Lead proactively! Grab the spotlight! If not now, then when? If not us, then who?

This is our time. Let’s make a big impact.”

- Leena Nair, CHRO, Unilever

About LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn Learning is a leading online learning platform that helps professionals learn relevant skills and achieve their goals. It combines a library of 16,700+ up-to-date courses in 7 different languages with an engaging, intuitive, and personalised learner experience. LinkedIn Learning also includes real-time skills insights that help learning leaders identify skills gaps. For more information, visit <http://learning.linkedin.com>.

Ready to explore how LinkedIn Learning can help your employees during this time of change?

Get in touch with us to schedule a free demo and discuss how LinkedIn Learning can help your employees learn relevant skills, become more resilient, and get ready for the return to work.

Request demo