



Why professional development is essential for future-ready organisations

Professional development improves productivity
Attract and retain employees with workplace training
Upskilling builds engaged teams and individuals
Using Go1 to get started with professional development

The world is changing faster than many of us can keep up with, making ongoing professional development a necessity. In fact, a large-scale analysis of employee surveys revealed that career development is now the second most important driver of employee satisfaction and engagement.

Additionally, the EY learning and development advisory forecasts that complex problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity will be the skills most in demand by 2030. Unfortunately, many employees have been unable to keep up with these new skills requirements, and with a national skills crisis looming, it is predicted that 47% of today's jobs will be gone in ten years.

To adapt to this emerging work environment, people need upgraded skills, specifically in digital, technical, management, and cultural capabilities. With this in mind, ongoing professional development is not only beneficial for employees, but a necessity for future-proofing organisations.

When organisations prioritise learning and development, employees can become more agile and adaptive, thereby improving their ability to cope with the rapid rates of change expected of them in the digital age.

However, despite a need to upskill the workforce, and the clear benefits of investing in learning, work-related training has dropped across all age groups, from 26.9% in 2013 to 21.5% in 2016-17. This report will provide insight into the benefits of professional development, highlighting the ways in which it can shape organisations. From improving productivity and employee retention to attracting the best talent, professional development helps employees to develop and businesses to thrive.

Chapter 1: Professional development improves productivity

Digital transformation presents an opportunity for improved productivity via innovation and cost reduction for a range of organisational processes. Despite this, productivity growth has slowed over the last decade.

Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) attributes this to a slow rate of digital adoption in less technologically advanced sectors. It seems this decline is finally shifting, with research indicating that a focus on skills development is the key to maximising productivity.

The OECD's recommendations emphasise the importance of investing in intangible capital, such as workers' skills. They also highlight the need for greater investment in developing complementary knowledge and capabilities, such as research and development, and process innovation.

In this chapter, we explore how skills development can improve productivity at both an organisational and employee level.

Improving productivity at an organisational level

Skills development is essential for organisations to improve productivity and put innovative ideas into practice. Research conducted by the Economic and Social Research Council shows a direct link between skills development and productivity in a number of areas:

1. **There is a positive link between workers turning external knowledge into creative output, spanning both high-skilled and intermediate-skilled workers.**

These findings indicate that developing an employee's skills base has a direct impact on their output. This applies to employees with varying levels of skill.

By providing opportunities for professional development, organisations can help employees build knowledge, which they can draw upon when working on new projects. Access to online learning tools also enables employees to acquire new skills or improve existing knowledge, without having to attend costly training courses run externally.

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2. An organisation's range of skill levels, including both formal qualifications and uncertified skills, improves productivity through innovative output.

To have a real impact on productivity, organisations should encourage employees to develop a range of skill types. Leaders can achieve this by supporting employees to complete formal qualifications with external institutions, as well as offering online learning solutions.

With online learning, leaders can offer employees training in both industry specific skills, like front of house training in hospitality, and soft skills, such as developing more effective communication with colleagues. Both skill types are equally important, and while many are not officially certified, the shift towards micro-credentials is providing recognition for previously unaccredited learning.

Employers should also ensure they hire staff members with a range of different skill types in the first place. While skills can be developed, different employees will bring inherent competencies to a new team.

3. When organisations push the technological limits, less innovative organisations benefit through knowledge transfer.

Through knowledge transfer, more innovative organisations can share information with those who are not at the cutting edge of the industry. This has implications for relationships between organisations, including the potential for them to cooperate – where doing so wouldn't affect business operations.

Although they may be in competition, organisations can work together in certain areas to provide better outcomes overall. In areas such as research and development, standard setting, and removing external obstacles and threats, organisations can mutually benefit from sharing knowledge and skills.

4. Producers of goods and services depend on the skills of the whole workforce to apply acquired knowledge effectively.

It is important to note that the skills of the workforce as a whole will directly impact the performance of individual departments. Each department in an organisation

is linked, even if indirectly, and the success or failure of each part of the whole affects overall output. If skills are developed across all departments, each has the potential to positively influence the other, and collectively improve productivity.

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Improving productivity at an employee level

While improving productivity at an organisational level is crucial, it is also important to look at how professional development can boost an individual's productivity.

Professional development has been found to improve productivity at the employee level in a number of ways, because it:

Provides employees with adequate training

If employees are given adequate training to perform their roles, they will know how to complete tasks from the start of their tenure. Of course, questions will still arise, but if employees are prepared, it is more likely they will be able to proceed independently, thereby boosting productivity.

However, if a new employee is expected to start without much guidance, this will reduce productivity in the long term because it will take longer for them to function at the required level.

This also extends to upskilling employees throughout their tenure. In the digital age, the requirements of a role can change suddenly, so employees need ongoing support to ensure they have the skills necessary for their work.

Increases employee confidence

With adequate training and preparation comes the confidence to perform well. When employees receive training either before starting a new role, or have access to learning tools as they progress with an organisation, they are far more likely to have the confidence to produce innovative work.

Inspires new employees

An effective onboarding process is important for any organisation. New employees should have a great first impression of the company they are about to work for, and be as prepared as possible for the work ahead.

Initial training programs can be used to both share an organisation's vision with new employees and tell the story so far. Ideally, after onboarding is complete, employees will be invested in an organisation and feel like a valued member of the team.

Chapter 2: Attract and retain employees through workplace training

Professional development is a key driver of employee satisfaction, while opportunities for learning have a **significant positive effect** on how committed employees are to their organisations. For organisations considering how to improve retention, it is crucial that employees find their work both challenging and rewarding.

This chapter will analyse the link between professional development and retaining employees to show the importance of providing learning opportunities in the workplace.

The challenge of finding and retaining talent

Finding top talent is an ongoing challenge. In research conducted by **McKinsey**, almost one third of senior leaders said finding talent was one of their biggest managerial obstacles. This **research** also suggests that employers in North America and Europe will need 16 million to 18 million more university-educated workers in 2020 than will be available. This suggests that robust professional development programs are essential to overcome a skills shortage.

Adding to this, talent is also difficult to retain. Research conducted by the **Harvard Business Review**, using face-to-face interviews and two international databases of 1,200 employees, found that young high achievers with a strong academic history are continually looking for new employment opportunities. Three quarters of the group regularly sent out resumes, contacted firms, and interviewed for jobs. On average, they left their organisations after 28 months.

When research shows that opportunities for learning and development can help to retain talent, organisations should review their learning and development strategy to ensure employees have the opportunity to explore their ongoing development goals.

Costs of employee turnover

The process of hiring, onboarding, and training can be costly. Renowned industry analyst **Josh Bersin** estimates the cost of losing an employee to be 1.5–2x the employee's annual salary. Depending on the experience and responsibility an employee might have, this could mean serious losses for an organisation.

While there are certainly costs associated with building up and maintaining a pool of good employees, loss of productivity as a result of employee turnover accounts for the largest percentage of human resource costs. Furthermore, **empirical studies** have concluded that organisations must hold on to their top talent and minimise employee turnover in order to thrive. An inability to do so could harm the organisation's competitiveness in a rapidly expanding global economy.

Clearly, the cost of losing employees is high, strengthening the case for ongoing professional development.

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Learning and progression as a solution

A recent study by Deloitte examined rewards that motivate employees in the workplace, finding that external rewards mean more than money, while personalised rewards that meet an employee's needs are highly desirable.

The report found that workers are inspired first by the nature of their work, and secondly by 'the ability to learn, grow and progress'. This indicates employees are highly motivated by professional development, meaning opportunities for learning could begin to address the problem of employee retention.

Respondents also ranked learning and development as one of the most important rewards to engage the alternative workforce. Many organisations have found it challenging to reward the greater range of worker types that exist today (such as gig workers and contractors). Opportunities for growth and learning could be one way to achieve this.

Finally, a workplace learning report released by LinkedIn suggests that 'talent developers will spend more time finding and closing skills gaps while exploring learner engagement tactics to inspire the modern learner, including the incoming Gen Z workforce.' This indicates that learning and development professionals are key to addressing the challenges modern workplaces face.

Chapter 3: Upskilling builds engaged teams and individuals

Promoting learning in the workplace is a cost-effective way for organisations to both build on the skills they already have and meet the constantly shifting skill requirements of today's workplace.

Research by the OECD emphasises the importance of investing in intangible capital, such as workers' skills. They highlight the need for greater investment in developing complementary knowledge and capabilities, including research and development and process innovation.

In this chapter, we explore current trends in workplace learning, examining how these trends help to build teams of skilled, well-prepared employees.

Personalised and integrated learning

In Deloitte's 2019 Global Human Capital Trends report, learning and development of individuals is rated as a key challenge organisations have to engage with. Additionally, employees rate the opportunity to learn as an important reason to take a job, while leaders understand that shifts in technology, work practices, and business models have created a necessity for lifelong development.

In response to this, organisations are attempting to personalise learning and integrate professional development into a working day. Industry analyst Josh Bersin describes this shift as 'learning in the flow of work', which new technologies help to facilitate.

When learning is embedded into the working day, rather than an activity organised separately, it can create a culture of ongoing learning. Ideally, employees would be presented with opportunities to learn through platforms they already use to work, such as when they log in at the start of the day.

Bersin uses the following example to explain the concept:

"In the application of safety and operational training...there are now adaptive learning solutions that deliver small 2-3 minute videos each day when an operator checks into work. The learning is carefully curated, spaced, and designed to deliver an outcome – and the employee answers questions (including questions about their confidence in the answers) to give the system enough information to decide what should come next."

With the support of HR professionals, employees are also being encouraged to take ownership of their learning, and independently assess the areas in which they may need further training or support.

As technology advances, an employee's learning experience can become more personalised, while also being further embedded into daily tasks and routines, thereby supporting the integration of learning into working life.

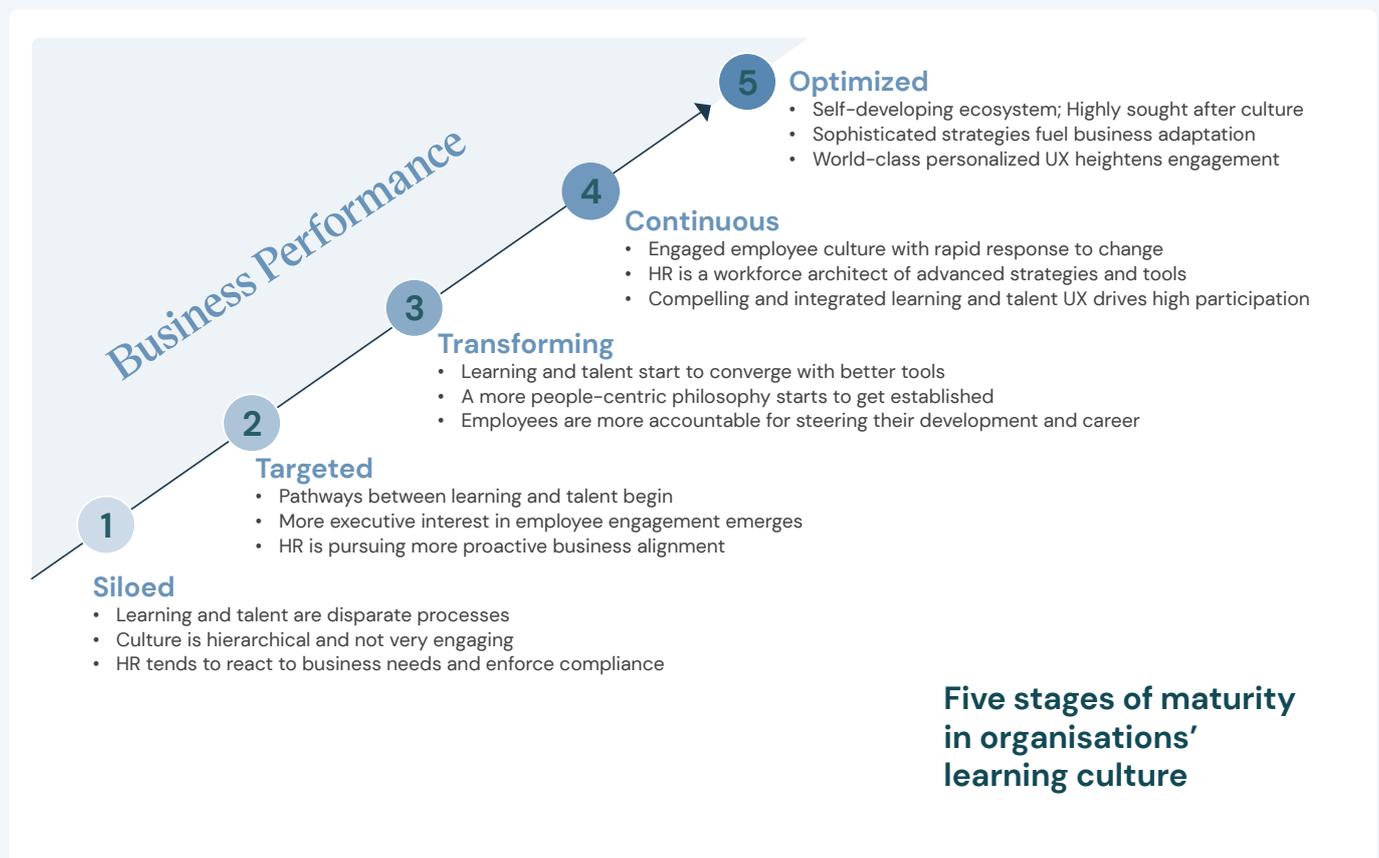
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Creating a culture of learning

Through a combination of employees training each other, online courses, and mentorship, an organisation can develop the expertise they need.

For each of these components to function well, organisations need to create a culture of openness to learning, while also streamlining systems to maximise their employees' potential.

When organisations focus on their learning culture, they move through five stages of maturity. The result is stronger business performance and a more adaptable workforce:



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For organisations looking to develop their learning culture, Soldo recommends leaders focus on the following:

1. Organisational values which reference the importance of learning and development.
2. Providing every employee with a safe haven for open communication.
3. Ensuring learning leaders participate in strategic planning to ensure business goals include consideration of the training and skills the workforce will need to achieve those objectives.
4. Encouraging employees to look for opportunities to share knowledge with their colleagues.
5. Encouraging employees to become learning junkies, who seek out new knowledge and find ways to apply it to improve the organisation's performance.

Data also shows that **42% of millennials** are more likely to leave their organisations because they are not learning fast enough. This data also finds that, among millennials, the "ability to learn and progress" is now a key element in their perception of a company's brand, while people rate "the opportunity to learn" as one of their top reasons for taking a job.

Further, millennials credit schools and universities with just **23% of the skills**, knowledge and experience they currently use in their jobs, whereas continuous professional development from employers carries more weight, contributing to **52% of the learning** millennials draw on at work.

By prioritising learning and development, employees can become more agile and adaptive, meaning they are better able to cope with rapid changes in the digital age.

In this kind of environment, opportunities for ongoing learning and growth are crucial, not only for employees to feel invested in their work, but for organisations to assemble the right skills. Rather than waiting for the right talent to appear, organisations should take an active role in making learning a core competency.

Chapter 4: Using Go1 to get started with professional development

Ongoing professional development is essential for organisations to remain competitive in the global marketplace. While leaders are aware that employee learning should be a focus, it can be challenging to streamline current learning and development systems, or find the resources to formalise the professional development process.

Luckily, Go1 is your employee's gateway to professional development growth. A one stop shop for all things training, Go1 makes it easy to compare the best training options, and find the right resources for ongoing professional development. With courses that cover numerous business functions, we can help your staff grow into their role by unlocking their potential. Content is available at all levels of difficulty and is suitable for any employee, in any department, in any region.

In the final chapter of this report, we will explain how Go1's range of courses can either enhance your organisation's existing learning and development strategy, or become a professional development hub for those just getting started.

Empower your learners

As we know, employees are now required to engage in continuous learning to keep up with rapid technological advancements. With this in mind, learning and development should empower learners through ownership, responsibility, teamwork, and autonomy. In adult education, empowerment is a key to success, so instructional methods should reflect this.

Encourage your learners to own their personal development training by giving them the flexibility to search and select courses that reflect their professional interests. This helps your employees take learning outside of the workplace, so they can access it whenever and wherever they want.

Accelerate skill development

The traditional, industrial model of education, featuring instructor-led classrooms and focus on knowledge sharing, is putting economic opportunities at risk. It is predicted that G20 economies could lose up to US\$11.5 trillion in cumulative GDP growth in the next ten years if skill building fails to catch up to the rate of technological development.

Help your workforce adapt by undertaking transferable soft skills training. Identify areas of improvement and support your learners to develop new professional skills from the soft skills area of the [Go1 Content Hub](#).

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Support learning as it happens

Diversity in learning enables participants to find the support they need and create a personalised learning experience. [Research](#) shows that millennials prefer a multimedia classroom setting, and crave more variety in learning environments. Millennial learners also want activities which are more creative than typical multiple choice quizzes or short answer questions. While this [research](#) was conducted on millennials, wider evidence suggests that this style of learning is more effective for learners in all age groups.

With Go1's collection of different content providers, training formats vary from bite-sized animated videos to short courses with multiple modules, ensuring our resources cater to all learning styles.

Choice promotes learning opportunities and activates user engagement in professional development training, so [Go1's Content Hub](#) offers unlimited access to a growing library containing thousands of learning resources from top training providers around the world.



Go1 helps millions of people in thousands of organisations engage in learning that is relevant, effective and inspiring.

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