Creating a Comprehensive Hybrid Learning Strategy

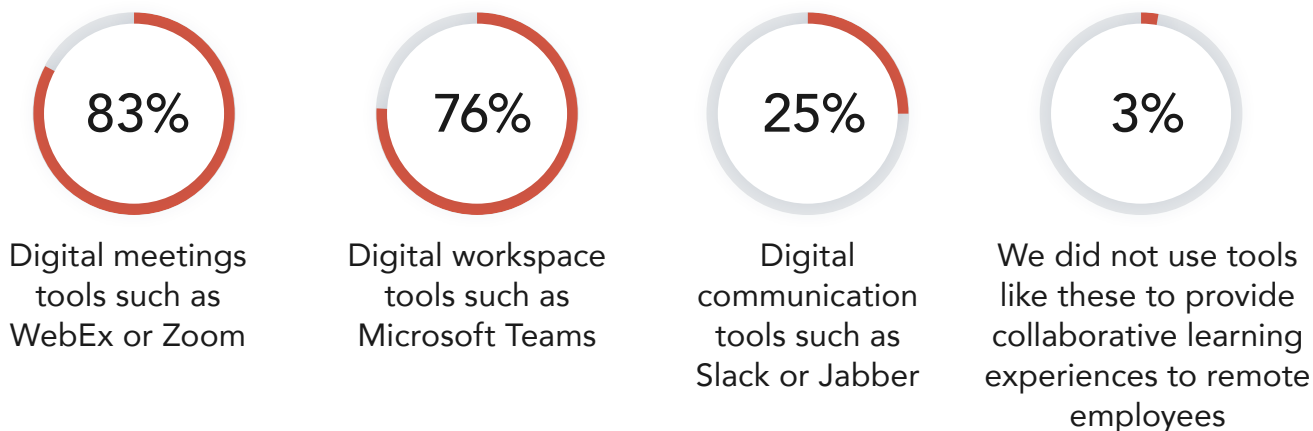# Table of Contents

Introduction

Prior to the pandemic, organizations had already been struggling with managing a mix of in-person and virtual classroom learning programs. Now, more than two years later, the landscape has only grown more complex — and the traditional approach to in-person and virtual instructor-led training hasn't been up to the task. With a significant portion of the workforce working remotely, organizations must get into a hybrid mindset when it comes to learning programs.

84%

More than 8 in 10 organizations plan to work in a hybrid model

Source: Brandon Hall Group, How Are You Adapting to Hybrid Work?"
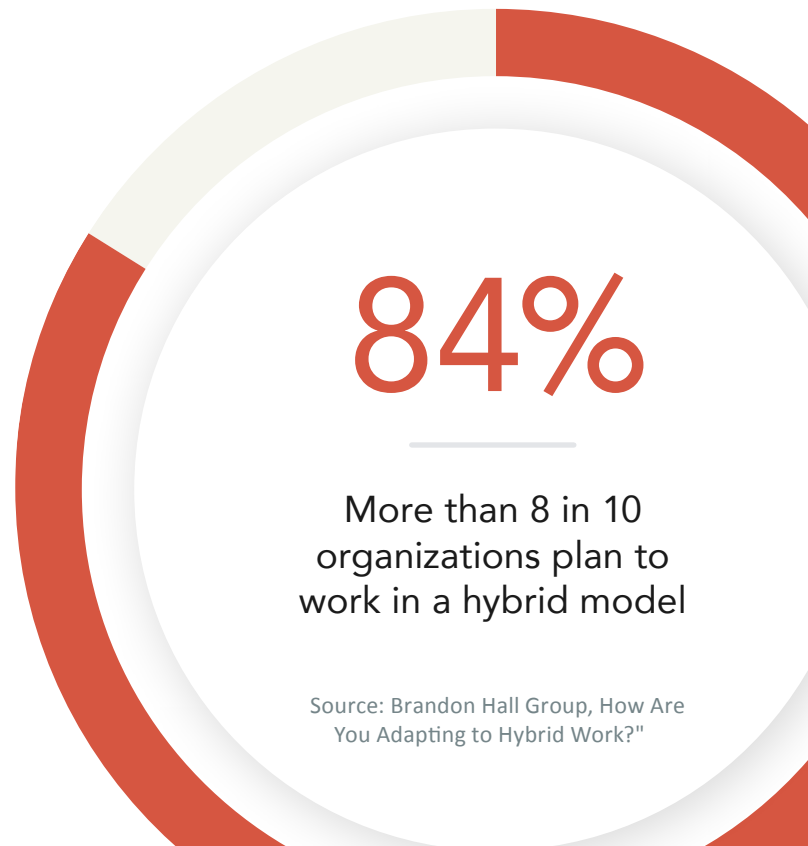
The upheaval caused by the pandemic has only served to accelerate the digital transformation that was already underway in most organizations. Because many were not in a position to shift in an agile way, they ended up leveraging whatever tools were currently available to them. This meant a series of quickly cobbled-together virtual classes that piggy-backed on top of the Zoom or Teams meetings people were already using.

During the pandemic, what digital tools did your organization use as a platform for delivering learning experiences to your remote workforce?

83%
Digital meetings tools such as WebEx or Zoom

76%
Digital workspace tools such as Microsoft Teams

25%
Digital communication tools such as Slack or Jabber

3%
We did not use tools like these to provide collaborative learning experiences to remote employees

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Learning for a Hybrid, Post-Pandemic Workforce

This may have met the immediate need organizations had when vast swaths of their workforce suddenly became remote. Unfortunately, this has approach proved to be unsustainable. There was no way to effectively scale the approach and most of the content did not align with the new medium.

Were the following tools highly successful in meeting the learning goals for your workforce?

41%
Digital meetings tools such as WebEx or Zoom

35%
Digital communication tools such as Slack or Jabber

34%
Digital workspace tools such as Microsoft Teams

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Learning for a Hybrid, Post-Pandemic Workforce

Now, as much of the workforce returns to on-site work, organizations face a new challenge. There are more permanently remote workers than there previously had been, so previous learning approaches no longer fit. But the environment is not exclusively remote. Learning must adopt a more flexible strategy to meet the needs of this new hybrid workforce.

41%
ILT is best when delivered as part of a blended learning program that also includes formats such as on-demand content.

35%
We've identified and applied approaches that make virtually-delivered ILT collaborative and social, akin to what you'd expect from in-person ILT.
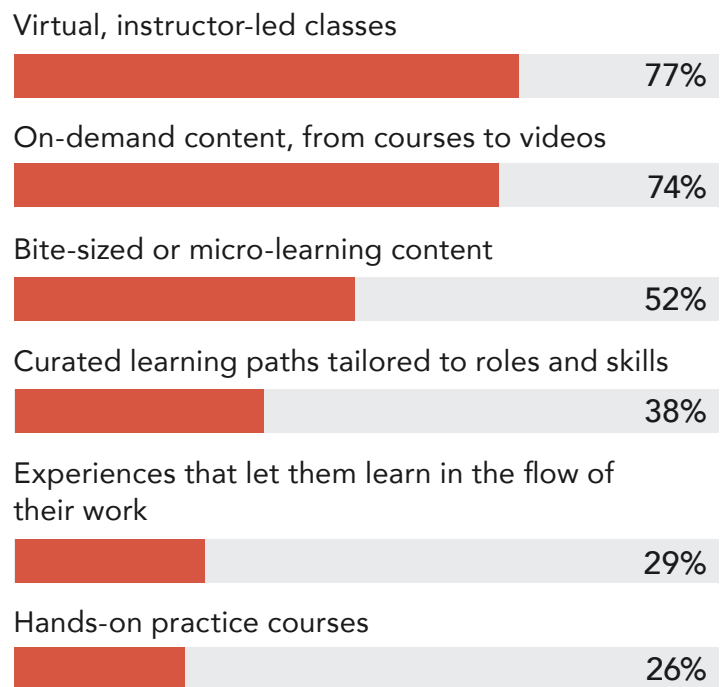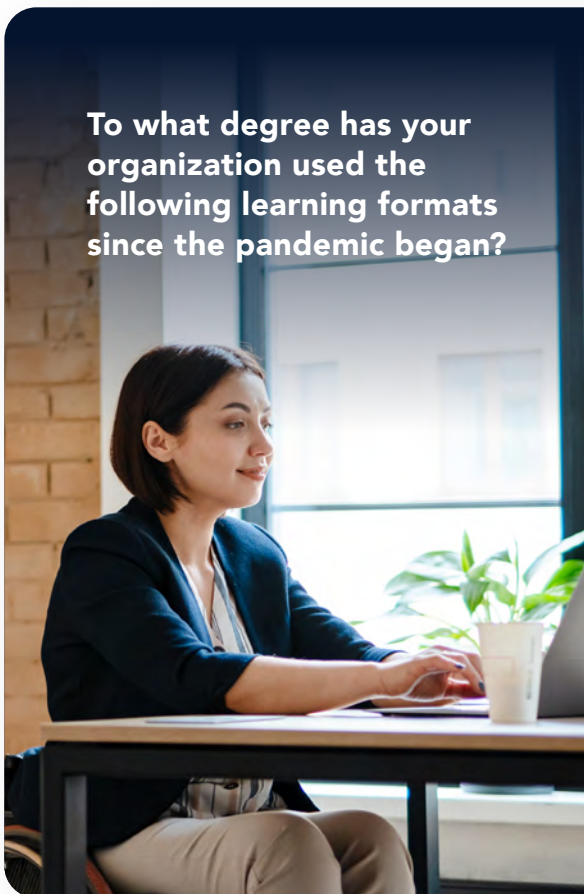
3%
ILT is the most effective way to learn.

16%
We are still struggling to find ways to make virtually-delivered ILT collaborative and social, akin to what you'd expect from in-person ILT.

5%
On-demand courses are just as effective as ILT.

Based on your experiences during the pandemic, what best describes your views of in-person, instructor-led training?

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Learning for a Hybrid, Post-Pandemic Workforce

This means re-thinking the array of learning technology organizations plan to deploy to deliver on their learning strategy. In this new hybrid environment, the isolation challenges for remote workers become even sharper, as they can begin to feel cut off from their peers who are back in the office. Learning teams have worked to address these challenges by shifting the way they create and deliver learning, leveraging tools that enable more communication and collaboration within a learning context. Learning experiences can go a long way toward driving community and culture, even when people are not in the same place.

To what degree has your organization used the following learning formats since the pandemic began?

Virtual, instructor-led classes
77%

On-demand content, from courses to videos
74%

Bite-sized or micro-learning content
52%

Curated learning paths tailored to roles and skills
38%

Experiences that let them learn in the flow of their work
29%

Hands-on practice courses
26%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, Learning for a Hybrid, Post-Pandemic Workforce

Ultimately, the direction in which organizations need to move is toward an environment that includes highly engaging digital learning experiences where learners can exchange diverse experiences and ideas through practical application. Classes and courses alone cannot deliver this.

Key Strategies

Evaluate what worked well during the pandemic and continue to use and improve those approaches

The early days of the pandemic put organizations through their paces when it came to rethinking in-person learning. Many alternatives were tried, some with less-than-stellar results. Organizations quickly found that they could not simply take in-person content and instructors and put them in a virtual environment. Virtual classrooms require a different approach, content and skill set.

It is critical to focus on the learning elements that resonated with learners and delivered expected results and avoid things that did not make the grade. Instructors, designers and even admins got a good hard look at their strengths and weaknesses in the pandemic environment. The post-pandemic learning experience should leverage the strengths while avoiding or mitigating the weaknesses.

Ensure learning cohorts include remote and on-site learners to mitigate segregation and isolation

One of the biggest challenges with the immediate shift to remote work is that many employees felt disengaged and disconnected. Pulling learners together into cohorts is a great way to keep both remote and on-site learners connected in a continuous, ongoing way. There are more opportunities for shared perspectives which lead to more knowledge breakthroughs. This is especially critical at a time when the only option for many remote workers is on-demand, self-paced learning. These programs can be extremely productive and impactful, but they don't offer many chances for the kind of connectivity that makes companies successful.

Using learning tools and technologies to keep people connected, communicating and collaborating will be critical to keeping remote staff from becoming isolated. Learning experiences can go a long way toward driving community and culture, even when people are not in the same place.

Strategies rated as important or critical during pandemic recovery

Foster an inclusive workplace
70%

Determine the critical skills needed to drive future business growth
70%

Creating a strong sense of belonging
69%

Make employees feel valued
69%

Assess and enable employee wellness/well-being
65%

Improve the level of trust between leaders and employees
59%

Re-imagine the corporate learning strategy in alignment with business goals
59%

Source: Brandon Hall Group, COVID-19: Impact on Workplace Practices

Leverage in-person learning for hands-on, collaborative exercises, rather than delivering information

Prior to the pandemic, in-person ILT was essentially a catchall for learning. Now that in-person time is a scarce and precious resource, organizations should only use it in scenarios where they can make the most of people being together. It would be a waste of time and energy to gather people in a room simply to tell them the information they need. Instead, they should absorb the information ahead of time and spend the in-person time collaborating and sharing, starting on the same page. Find out from learners what they missed most about learning in person and begin there.

At the same time, leverage technology that can bring remote learners into the environment synchronously. It you use breakout groups, make sure they include on-site and remote learners. It can be a challenge meeting the needs of both groups simultaneously, but it helps to set ground rules ahead of time for how learners will contribute and communicate so no one is left out.

Consider reallocating the in-person budget (travel, accommodations, etc.) to virtual/digital tools

Budget constraints come in as the number-three challenge in developing and delivering engaging learning to the hybrid workforce.

1/3 of companies underwent a reduction in the L&D workforce and 42% had a reduction in the L&D budget.

Given that many companies will be dealing with at least some kind of hybrid workforce moving forward, some of the L&D budget that was allotted to in-person learning and put on hold due to the pandemic may be allocated elsewhere. Now that people have been connecting and communicating virtually for some time now, it doesn't make sense to spend a lot of resources on travel and accommodations — at least not as frequently. This can free up resources for tools and technologies better suited to the hybrid workforce.

Build or acquire new skills within L&D to meet learner demands

L&D has been challenged to upskill and reskill the workforce in the dynamic wake of the pandemic. It only makes sense that the L&D function must do its own upskilling and reskilling. Taking stock of what the future learning ecosystem should look like, then running a skills-gap analysis, learning leaders can begin to identify places where they need to move, promote or hire people. Skills building next-gen content, analyzing data and better business acumen will continue to become increasingly critical.

Which of the following will be the most important step to successfully develop and deliver highly engaging learning in a hybrid work environment?

61%
Retrain learning organization

39%
Choose new technology

Source: Brandon Hall Group,
Learning for the Hybrid Workforce

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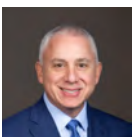
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- Founded at Stanford's Social Algorithm Lab in 2012

- Used to develop high-value capabilities that accelerate business performance

- Serve corporate, executive education, and professional training markets. Over two million learners to date

Select Customers

Select Awards

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To learn more, please visit: www.novoed.com

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