It's Time for an L&D Revolution

The AI Era Arrives

the joshbersin company

Overview

Over the past two years, we've engaged with hundreds of L&D leaders through interviews and surveys, and the message is clear: AI is set to revolutionize the learning environment. This study explores the significant shift toward "AI-first learning" in corporate settings, highlighting the profound disruptions this transition brings.

Our research reveals that AI fundamentally alters traditional methods, technologies, operating models, and outcomes. By enabling personalized and adaptive learning experiences, AI enhances engagement and effectiveness. It streamlines content creation and delivery, reducing the time and resources needed to develop training programs.

This report provides HR, L&D, and business leaders with the inspiration and guidance necessary to rethink their training strategies. By embracing AI-first learning, organizations can capitalize on new opportunities, fostering a culture of continuous development and maintaining a competitive edge in a dynamic world.

In This Report

A Long-Awaited Revolution in Corporate Learning

Investment in corporate learning has continued steadily over the past ten years, despite two recessions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, organizations spend nearly $400 billion a year on employee training, professional development, and upskilling.[1]

Why is this investment so enduring? Corporate learning, which was once considered a luxury, is now a strategic mandate.

Every company wants to improve productivity, technology adoption, and customer experience. But achieving these goals requires a never-ending focus on learning, skills development, knowledge-sharing, and professional growth. The World Economic Forum estimates that 44% of on-the-job skills will be disrupted by 2030[2]—and with the half-life of skills shortening, employees must upskill constantly just to keep pace.

Corporate L&D Is Stagnating

Despite rising demand for training and upskilling, corporate L&D departments have struggled to adapt. Our most recent Corporate Learning survey finds that only 27% of companies believe they are effectively building the skills and capabilities needed to support their business strategy. The issue is not a lack of desire; rather, L&D departments are burdened with legacy platforms, outdated content, and antiquated operating models and roles, preventing them from unlocking dynamic learning everywhere (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Evolution of Corporate L&D

1998–2004 Blended and e-Learning	2005–2011 Talent-Driven Learning	2012–2018 Digital and Microlearning	2019–2024 Learning in the Flow of Work	2025+ Dynamic Learning Everywhere
Formats				
Course Catalog Online University	Learning Path Career Track	Video Self-Authored Mobile YouTube	Microlearning Creator Economy Intelligent Skills Systems	AI-Generated AI-Curated
Philosophy				
Instructional Design Kirkpatrick	Blended Learning Social Learning	70-20-10 Taxonomies	Learning Experience Capability Development	Hyperpersonalized
User Experience				
Self-Study Online Learning	Career-Focused Library of Topics	Learning on Demand Embedded Learning	Everyone, All the Time, Everywhere	User-Generated
Systems				
LMS as e-Learning Platform	LMS as Talent Platform	LMS as Experience Platform	Many Systems, LXP, LMS, Mobility Skills Integrated	Locally Delivered
Milestones				
e-Learning Tools	LMS Arrives	Talent Management	LXP Arrives	Skills Engines Zoom, Teams AI

LMS (Learning Management System), LXP (Learning Experience Platform)
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

1 *The State of the Corporate Training Market Executive Summary*, Training Industry, Inc., 2025.

2 *The Future of Jobs Report 2025*, World Economic Forum, January 2025.

Despite massive shifts across the digital landscape, only 15% of organizations actively experiment with new learning technologies. Today, 41% of companies use blended learning and 26% use microlearning, yet the adoption of adaptive learning (3%), personalized learning (8%), and virtual reality (VR) and simulations (3%) remains low.[3]

With so many advances in technology and content, what has kept L&D from innovating at scale?

Part of the answer lies in how corporate learning has traditionally been viewed and structured. Corporate learning is based on an outdated paradigm. L&D has long been considered a "training" function, dependent on a legacy publishing model that struggles to keep up with the pace of change. In this new era of AI-powered dynamic content, it's time to move in a different direction.

Interviews with learning leaders highlight the problem: training teams and content providers still rely on a "course-based" instructional format, much like how training was done 30 years ago. Videos and courses follow a linear path, requiring employees to page through content rather than simply ask a question and get an answer.

Organizations remain constrained by legacy operating models that position L&D as a cost center rather than a strategic enablement function, limiting their ability to fully empower the workforce. Many L&D teams are bloated in size, still built around traditional roles like instructional designers and content creators—functions that can increasingly be reimagined or replaced by AI.

It's time for a revolution. Driven by AI, corporate learning is about to become more dynamic, more personalized, and more integrated with knowledge management.[4] Instead of being forced to "take courses," employees will be able to learn where they are, as they want, with limitless opportunities to grow. The days of employees browsing portals to find courses are over. Agents and dynamic chatbots now deliver learning exactly how and where employees need it.

Legacy Platforms, Content, and Operations

In recent interviews with 40 chief learning officers (CLOs), we heard a consistent list of challenges: complex legacy platforms are hard to use, employees can't find what they need, and L&D teams are bogged down with dated instructional design tools and slow time to market.

Our research supports these findings: only 15% of organizations have their L&D systems well integrated with other corporate systems, only 12% offer career pathways to employees, and only 16% have programs to help people advance skills in their current jobs. Even fewer are developing career pathways for roles that are being augmented with AI.

The consequence? Much of the high-value training has moved out of corporate L&D and into the business itself.

Sales teams, for example, often have a "sales enablement" function that integrates development, sales tools, and product information. Manufacturers typically administer training by plant or region, often with local instructors. Healthcare facilities train clinical professionals on the job, sharing content among their peer organizations.

Centralized L&D still exists but has become streamlined to focus on management, leadership, DEI, and compliance training. With the help of AI, L&D will take on a new, more employee-centric role, empowering teams to train, enable, and support employees more effectively through the power of AI-driven solutions.

The L&D role has changed before. In the 1990s, we built corporate universities, modeled after GE's Crotonville and other leadership programs. In the 2000s, we appointed global CLOs, who managed the corporate LMS and vast libraries of online learning programs.

3 Corporate Learning research survey, The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

4 *Dynamic Skilling: Anticipating and Mitigating Current and Future Skills Gaps*, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Jordan Hammerstad/The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

Then around 2010, attention shifted to skills and the war for talent, integrating L&D under the head of HR and often reporting to talent management. This move pulled L&D away from the business.

Now, as AI democratizes this domain, we move to a new model where L&D becomes an "enablement" function, managing dynamic content systems and assisting business leaders in training, enabling, and supporting their teams (see Figure 2).

Centralized L&D once made sense, but today's corporate learning is saddled with outdated platforms, excessive content, and legacy operating models (see Figure 3 on the next page).

The new model, which we call "AI-first learning," breaks free from these constraints, allowing companies to implement dynamic learning solutions that empower employees, leaders, and the business to take control of their own learning journeys.

Figure 2: The Role of L&D: From Education to Enablement

1990s CLO Role Created	2000s CLO as a Global L&D Leader	2010s CLO Integrated into HR	Present CLO Leads AI-First L&D
Focus			
Education	**Learning**	**Skills**	**Enablement**
Context			
Rise of "knowledge workers"	Globalization	War for talent	Work redesign
L&D Goal			
Standardized and formal education	Cultivating a learning culture	Building a skills-based organization	Enabling workforce and business agility
Tech			
Heavy reliance on in-person training	LMS; traditional L&D tech stack	Talent intelligence and talent marketplaces; stagnation in L&D tech	Inverted L&D architecture; AI for every employee
Outcomes			
Corporate universities and leadership academies	Federated model of global L&D	Career pathways and internal mobility	Democratized content generation; adaptive and personalized learning
CLO Role			
Driver of transformation and change	Pragmatic, business-aligned leader	An overlooked and underutilized leader	Driver of workforce and business enablement

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

Figure 3: Legacy Technology, Content, and Operating Models

Legacy Technology	Legacy Content	Legacy Operating Model
LMSs, designed to host content of any type, are primarily compliance and tracking systems.	Content is time-consuming to build, static, and expensive to translate and update.	L&D is often viewed as a cost center, not a consulting partner.
LXP systems are designed as "portals" to myriad types of content and often complicate the tech architecture.	Content is developed as courses, with limited ability to personalize or "customize" experience.	Needs analyses are done periodically but not continuously, making it difficult to analyze the real impact of programs.
Legacy learning platforms, lacking integration with the organizational tech stack, hinder the flow of business, HRISs, talent marketplaces, and learning data.	Employees struggle to locate and isolate the right resource, with numerous portals that are often hard to find.	Content development teams are large and slow, following an industrial publishing model.

HRIS (Human Resources Information System)
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

Legacy Platforms

Most corporate training solutions still rely on LMSs—platforms designed in the late 1990s to serve as master tracking systems for training. Originally developed to manage compliance programs, today LMSs hold hundreds or even thousands of courses, videos, articles, and assessments.

As technologies, most LMSs are old. The LMS market initially focused on the emergence of e-learning. Because the market is so fragmented, there are very few large LMS vendors, so private equity-backed firms like Cornerstone have acquired competitors, leading to a lack of innovation and investment and a resulting lag in employee experience. At its core, the LMS is designed to track and manage content, not be easy to use.

Architecturally, LMSs were designed to operate *independently of content*. This means the platform itself cannot recognize what the content is about, requiring administrators to tag and label it manually. This time-consuming task results in a system where it's hard to find anything.

A banking client noted that employees must make at least six clicks—and sift through tens of thousands of content items—just to start a course. Once aspiring to match the ease of Amazon or YouTube, these systems now feel outdated in a world of seamless social media.

Until recently, cloud software company Blackbaud juggled seven disparate LMSs, each tailored to a different training need such as compliance, sales, or customer success. This fragmentation resulted in operational inefficiencies, escalated costs, and a diminished learner experience. Moreover, this patchwork approach fell short of effectively reaching and engaging the organization's entire talent ecosystem.[5]

Many vendors have innovated: platforms like Degreed, Microsoft Viva Learning, 360Learning, Udemy, LinkedIn, LearnUpon, and Docebo let employees find things more quickly, build skills libraries, and deliver great content. But despite these advances, the sheer volume of content often gets in the way—compelling companies to build custom journeys, learning paths, and smarter search tools.

AI can transform this experience. Employees can simply ask a question, and the platform will find the answer, deliver the content, and guide the employee to learn more. This prompts us to consider a critical question: Do we still need to build courses, or can AI curate and assemble the content for us?

5 *Blackbaud Builds a Unified Learning Ecosystem*, Jordan Hammerstad/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

CASE IN POINT

Galileo Learn™ Transforms Professional Development for HR

Galileo Learn, the next evolution of the Josh Bersin Academy (JBA), is reimagining HR professional development with AI-powered content creation and delivery. Developed in partnership with Sana, this platform offers dynamic, interactive, hyperpersonalized learning experiences tailored to HR professionals' needs.

Key features include AI-driven simulations and personalized learning journeys that encourage deeper engagement with complex HR concepts. Learners participate in realistic scenario-based exercises, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. This approach enhances understanding and retention by enabling learners to experiment with strategies and receive immediate feedback tailored to their responses, effectively bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Through AI-driven conversational interfaces, users can explore content most relevant to their immediate needs, seamlessly integrating with the platform's immersive experiences. Additionally, Galileo Learn allows organizations to integrate their proprietary content, creating a comprehensive and customized learning environment. This flexibility supports a holistic learning experience that aligns with specific organizational goals, ensuring that HR professionals receive training that is both relevant and impactful.

When discussing the timing of the JBA transition from a catalog-based system to Galileo Learn, Amy Farner, Executive Vice President of Product at The Josh Bersin Company, emphasized, "The old ways of working will not survive the AI revolution. If organizations are not willing to radically transform the ways they create content and the modalities of learning that are available, they risk becoming irrelevant."

Legacy Content

A second challenge is the billions of dollars invested in legacy content. Despite the success of Skillsoft, Khan Academy, Udemy, Coursera, Pluralsight, LinkedIn, Harvard Publishing, and other content providers, vendors tend to build "courses." These long-form programs are hard to update and often lack actionable content for busy workers, forcing them to look elsewhere for help.

There's nothing wrong with the course paradigm for education, but many businesspeople don't have time for this format. The typical YouTube watcher only spends a few minutes on a video, and that behavior has changed our expectations for content.

As our attention spans shorten, our appetite for content has accelerated. Employees expect training to be as current and entertaining as YouTube or TikTok, prompting L&D departments to publish shorter courses, which in turn clutters up the LMS.

Companies do build masterful programs and courses, but many are generic videos or chapter-based, sometimes requiring hours of page-turning. LinkedIn Learning, one of the largest players in the market, has barely evolved its content format in the past decade.

We are not dismissing the value of instructional design; it is an important part of corporate education. But consider the massive volume that is needed. As our client Rolls-Royce explained, mastering the maintenance of a single jet engine would take 500 years of learning to complete. The industry needs a way to deliver content faster, more dynamically, and with pinpoint precision at the point of need.

Timeliness is another challenge. If it takes 90 days to build a program, then maintenance and updates will be slow. Most corporate systems, programs, and offerings change all the time, so there needs to be a learning solution that lets L&D professionals update content daily.

Formats must be short and dynamic. Consider the needs of a frontline worker, an executive, or a manufacturing professional. These individuals may want a 10-minute summary, a podcast, or a quick update on a topic. L&D professionals simply cannot keep up.

Enter AI—a technology tailormade for L&D. Thanks to new AI tools entering the market, content can be authored, distributed, and updated directly from the source—whether it's a PDF, a book, a checklist, audio, video, or even an interview.

AI can support L&D teams in rapidly authoring and delivering content, totally changing their delivery model. With these tools, the L&D team can be smaller, closer to the business, and more consultative in its approach (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: From Static Training to AI-Powered Content

Traditional Static Training	AI-Powered Content
Episodic training programs	New content published continuously
Complex skills models done by hand	Skills tagging and inference by AI
HR-driven, corporate-focused	Distributed in the business
Content authored by professional designers	Content authored by AI, SME-driven
Courses built as "one-size-fits-all"	Role-based, personalized, adaptive
Content only published by L&D	Content published by any SME
Hard to find relevant courses	All courses tagged and indexed for RAG search
Q&A must be authored in advance	AI platform can answer questions from any content
Tutors provided by SMEs or L&D	AI-powered tutors driven by AI

RAG (Retrieval Augmented Generation), SME (Subject Matter Expert)
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

CASE IN POINT

Moderna's L&D Team Leverages AI for Outsize Results

Moderna, a leading biotechnology company known for messenger RNA technology, has undertaken a transformative merger of its digital and HR functions, aiming to supercharge its operations by bringing together "digital technology" and "human" resources.

The company's decision to merge its people and digital organizations is emblematic of its commitment to harnessing the power of technology as a key enabler of human potential. Moderna envisions a workforce where bots and humans work seamlessly together, marking a pioneering step in empowering its employees to scale their impact with the latest technology.

Moderna's L&D team exemplifies this transformation, leveraging AI to revolutionize its end-to-end learning operations and offerings. "AI is our force multiplier—it helps us scale learning with precision and connect people to impact faster," said Molly Nagler, Head of Learning at Moderna.

The Moderna L&D tech stack includes AI-powered tools like Arist and Synthesia, as well as several custom Moderna-built GPTs. Arist generates and launches targeted microlearning modules, seamlessly integrated into platforms like Microsoft Teams, enabling timely and relevant learning.

Meanwhile, Synthesia is leveraged for rapidly creating engaging video content with AI avatars, significantly reducing production time and enhancing content accessibility. Custom GPTs further provide on-demand learner support, offering immediate answers, guidance, and opportunities to practice.

"We're building a powerful AI-enabled learning stack that reduces development time, automates support, and brings high-quality learning into the flow of work," said Greg Dracos, Senior Director of Learner Experience & Innovation at Moderna.

Continued →

The impact of this AI-driven approach is profound. AI tools have drastically reduced content development time from months to hours, leading to substantial cost savings, particularly in video production. This technology also enables the rapid deployment of learning programs, in many cases facilitating same-day implementation.

Custom GPTs, built by the L&D team, enhance decision-making and employee experience, helping resolve support tickets faster and streamlining mandatory training requirements. In one recent example, Moderna used AI to review training requirements against roles and streamlined mandatory training for an employee group of 200, saving thousands of FTE hours that would have been spent in duplicative or unnecessary training.

Legacy Operations

A third challenge in L&D is the operation itself, which hasn't changed very much in years. While some companies rely on employee-authored content and use podcasts and other media innovations, the core instructional design process remains. Our latest benchmark study shows that only 10% of companies believe their L&D team is proficient in using gen AI tools, and only 4% have reviewed and redesigned their L&D processes around the power of AI.

One of our clients, a global financial services company, told us they have 110 instructional designers on their team. L&D teams continue hiring video producers, assessment experts, LMS administrators, and many program managers and schedulers to manage live events and workshops. Today, much of this can be done automatically by AI, yet only 8% of companies indicate they are using AI tools to automate administrative tasks such as enrollment management, reporting, and employee communication.[6]

Operations can quickly become complicated. Consider a luxury brand we work with that operates as country-specific business units around the world. It has an L&D leader in each country, each with their own design and delivery team, localizing and translating content. While the corporate group tries to standardize tools and platforms, it must also accommodate many local versions.

This challenge is particularly acute in creative, experience-centric companies, where business units are often reluctant to give up decision-making and authority to corporate. The result is a lot of duplication and rework across L&D.

This complexity holds companies back. According to our latest Corporate Learning research:

- Only 33% of surveyed organizations believe their L&D strategy aligns with their business strategy.
- Just 14% report their HR leadership is committed to future-proofing the skills of the L&D team (despite L&D skills being a key factor of L&D impact).
- Just 16% focus on developing the consulting capabilities of their L&D professionals.

CLOs and L&D leaders remain passionate about the learning mission. Yet, when asked, "How well are you integrated into the strategic imperatives of the company?" many often shrug.

Operational challenges have left many L&D functions struggling to keep up with their organizations' evolving needs.

Beyond the Publishing Model

Almost all L&D teams operate in a traditional "publishing model." They identify a problem, build a course or other experience, upload it into the LMS, and then launch and promote it. Employees click around to find what they need, then decide to "consume it" when they have time. It's as if you walked into Starbucks and they told you to come back a few days later to "find" your coffee.

The AI-powered world of L&D is radically different. Companies load core content and create templates or instructional formats in a single platform. The system dynamically generates content, giving users many experiences in the language of their choice.

6 Corporate Learning research survey, The Josh Bersin Company, 2025.

Wolters Kluwer, a global provider of professional information, software solutions, and services, uses Arist to generate microlearning experiences. Its agile L&D team can create content in minutes and, after a streamlined review process, seamlessly deliver it through Microsoft Teams.

This approach bypasses traditional LMS limitations, allowing the company to embed practical and relevant learning directly into the daily workflows of its workforce, including contingent workers who were previously difficult for the L&D team to reach.

For instance, when global gen AI training was required on short notice, its L&D team swiftly created and deployed an interactive learning experience to the entire organization, demonstrating its agility and capability to drive workforce enablement.

Our new Galileo Learn platform lets employees learn by asking questions, interacting with tutors, taking short courses, listening to podcasts, or traversing a credentialed curriculum. The system knows the employee's skills and learning history, so they get a custom experience personalized to their needs.

The revolution is real: you can order your favorite coffee, pick your cup and level of garnish, and consume it within minutes. The L&D team has entirely changed: shifting from "content publishers" to "dynamic learning platform managers" and from "instructional designers" to "learning architects."

Learning architects at cloud-based data platform Databricks are tasked with thinking beyond traditional curriculum development. They focus on the overall learning experience, considering what assessments are needed, what skills are required, and how to design the right experience for learners.

This approach moves beyond traditional courses or curricula, focusing instead on achieving specific outcomes for the learner. It leverages AI-driven virtual tutors and cohort-based learning models to facilitate personalized and scalable training solutions.

Waste: The High Price of Legacy L&D

Another critical issue to address is waste. Legacy L&D systems often result in large volumes of underutilized or duplicative content, along with the hidden costs of consultants, external providers, and special events.

While most L&D teams feel pinched, their spending is filled with inefficiencies. According to our latest research, organizations spend an average of $1,100 per employee on L&D annually—and more than 40% of that budget typically goes to external platforms, services, and content.

Our forensic audits of L&D find millions of dollars spent on duplicative content libraries, consultants, outsourcing firms, executive education programs, and tools.

And it's actually worse. Research by Ebbinghaus finds that 90% of learning is forgotten within a week, if not reinforced.[7] A seminal report by Robinson and Robinson in 1995 found that most corporate training does not lead to behavior change,[8] results that continue to be reinforced decades later. *Harvard Business Review* finds "little evidence of impact" from corporate training.[9]

While there is no perfect answer to this problem, it's well known that traditional courseware is filled with waste. Driven by poor information about what people need, L&D teams focus on producing content rather than empowering employees with "just enough" skills to do their jobs. To keep the content current, this manual, design-centric approach to L&D creates long cycle times and complex maintenance headaches.

If we want to reduce waste, we need faster feedback on what's working. This means delivering content quickly, immediately measuring results, and continuously getting feedback from learners. AI-driven learning delivers this; published courses in the LMS do not.

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7 *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, Hermann Ebbinghaus/Teachers College, Columbia University, 1913. Translated by Henry A. Ruger, PhD, and Clara Bussenius.

8 *Performance Consulting: A Strategic Process to Improve, Measure, and Sustain Organizational Results*, Dana G. Robinson, James C. Robinson, Jack J. Phillips, and Patricia Pulliam Phillips/Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2015.

9 "Why Leadership Training Fails—and What to Do About It," Michael Beer, Magnus Finnström, and Derek Schrader/*Harvard Business Review*, October 2016.

Research and benchmarking from *Training* magazine finds that, on average, 30% to 40% of L&D spending is on instructional design.[10] Our initial research shows that almost half of this budget can be eliminated or reallocated with AI-driven platforms. Freed from constant content production and maintenance, L&D professionals can transition into HRBP roles, performance consulting roles, or assessment and other roles more closely tied to the business.

Our research also shows that AI-based content engineering improves program quality. Eliminating complexity means teams can iterate quickly. When a course or program misses the mark, it can be updated almost immediately. Feedback from chat-driven learning gives learning leaders instant information about what employees need. This transformation allows L&D departments to reallocate resources more effectively.

The mci group's L&D transformation, led by MCI Institute—the organization's learning and knowledge Centre of Excellence—shows how an AI-first platform can drive operational efficiency and real organizational change. As a global leader in event management and marketing communications, mci group partnered with Sana to move beyond legacy systems to strengthen its decentralized learning model at regional and local office levels.

This approach empowers business units and teams to create, deliver, and track customized learning experiences, ensuring greater relevance and autonomy. Beyond decentralization, advanced AI search now makes corporate knowledge instantly accessible—transforming learning from passive content consumption to active, on-demand problem-solving at the point of need.

Additionally, with operational learning decentralized and AI search enhancing access to knowledge, the company's lean and dynamic L&D team has shifted its focus toward consulting with business units, delivering valuable performance insights. The success of this evolution has expanded their role beyond internal support—positioning them as trusted advisors to selective clients seeking to integrate AI and adapt to evolving learning demands.

By stepping into this consulting role, the L&D function has become a key contributor to both revenue generation and organizational performance, underscoring the business impact of an AI-enabled, self-directed learning ecosystem.

AI-First Learning: A New Role for L&D

Our name for this new world is AI-first learning, an idea that captures the shift toward machine-generated, curated, and personalized development. This transformation is happening today and will only get better every year.

What Is AI-First Learning?

AI-first means the LMS is replaced or significantly augmented by a dynamic content-generation platform. This platform, which uses gen AI for content creation, forms the basis of the learning experience, learning administration, and content generation. It creates dynamic courses, programs, and experiences (including tutors, simulations, characters, and course assistants) and can manage and update content in minutes.

As magical as it sounds, this technology is based on today's gen AI. With the platforms in the market today, this approach gives employees the personalized skills-based "learning in the flow of work" we have always wanted (see Figure 5 on the next page).

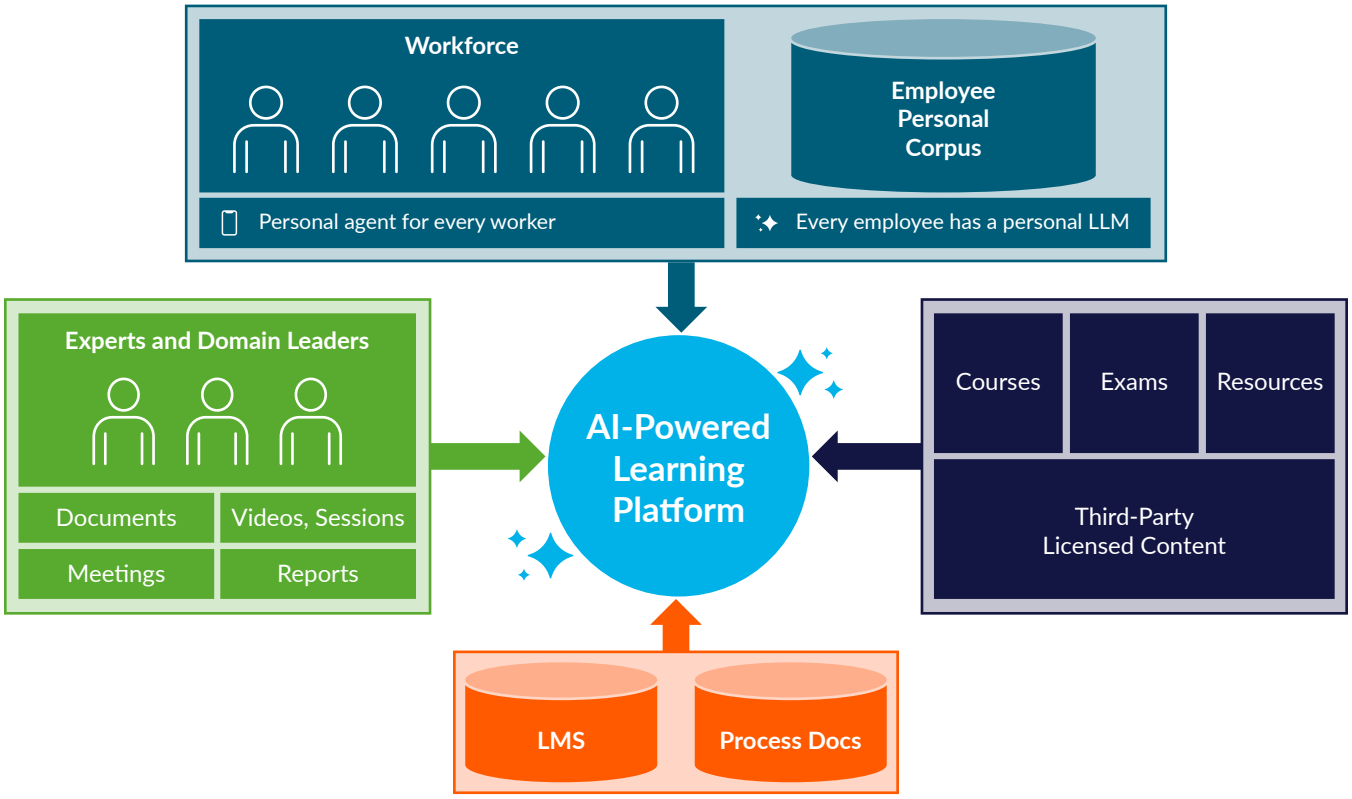
Not only does this model simplify and speed the content development process, but it also lets a learner "ask a question" instead of taking a course. It lets the L&D team function as an "enablement" organization, solving day-to-day needs as well as long-term development. It also gets L&D out of the "publishing business" to focus on curriculum design, needs analysis, and corpus (content) management.

Remember that gen AI large language models (LLMs) are now embedded in our phones, PCs, and everyday work tools, giving every employee access to their own personal AI assistant. A frontline worker or office manager can ask a question, tap into local information, and quickly access training materials tailored to their store, region, or company. Suddenly, the traditional L&D department can deliver solutions much closer to the business, doing away with distant "needs analysis" projects and giving teams local control.

Other benefits include automatic or instant translation, ad hoc conversion into podcast or other preferred formats, and the ability for each learner to personalize their learning and support needs in their own unique way. In many ways, AI is the perfect technology for corporate L&D.

10 *2024 Training Industry Report*, *Training* magazine, November 20, 2024.

Figure 5: The New Model for AI-First Learning



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

How do companies implement such a solution? And what happens to all the existing content, programs, curricula, skills models, and compliance they've already invested in?

Most companies will maintain their legacy programs while gradually phasing in AI-first solutions. Our research shows that most of this investment can be eliminated or rebuilt, leaving little compliance content and LMS-oriented recordkeeping to maintain.

A New Learning Architecture

It's important to discuss how the L&D technology architecture itself will evolve.

Legacy Architecture

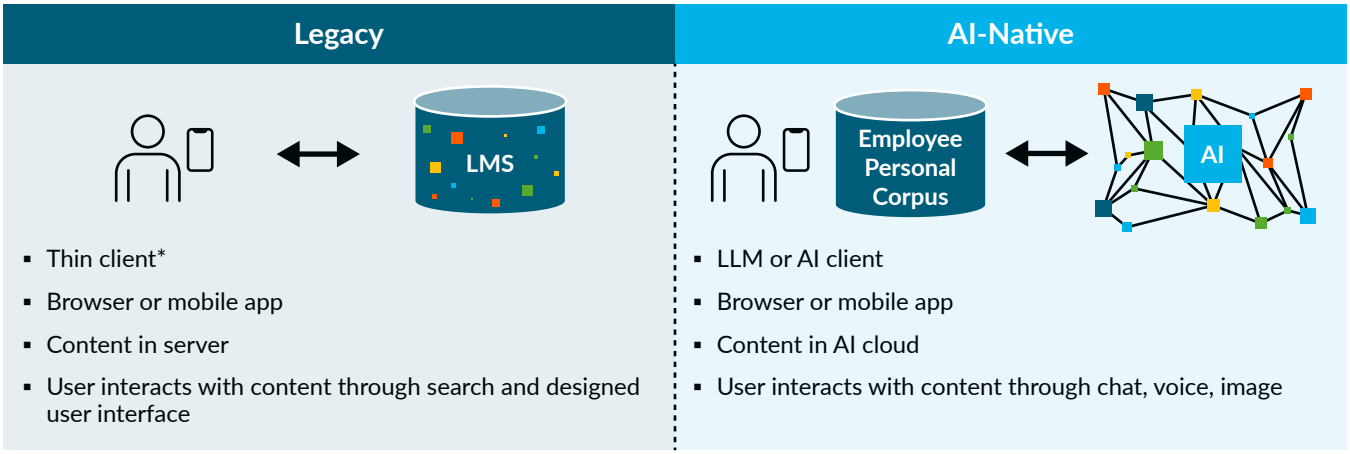
In the existing L&D technology stack, we essentially have a client/server architecture. The content—whether it's video, courses, or other materials—is stored in an LMS or other server. The user interface for accessing this content is usually embedded in the LMS, enabling the learner to answer questions, jump ahead, go back, and look things up. The LMS stores scores and tracking information so the system can bookmark where the learner left off. Administrators can view completion rates, scores, and pathing information from the LMS.

AI-Native Architecture

In the AI-native L&D technology stack, we have a peer-to-peer architecture. Here, each user has their own AI-powered LLM embedded in their phone or another device, which communicates with an AI server. The AI server dynamically creates or publishes content, enabling the user to ask questions or store local data in their LLM as they interact with the content (see Figure 6 on the next page).

This setup means the user can upload a photo, document, or voice recording, which the local LLM can interpret directly or send to the server for further analysis.

Figure 6: Comparison of Legacy and AI-Native L&D Architectures



*Note: A "thin client" is a minimal computer that depends on a central server for processing, storage, and applications.
Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

The AI "cloud" can now do many things: it can present a traditional linear course, answer questions, or even generate dynamic content. On the other hand, the "local" LLM may be a simple chatbot or an intelligent agent of its own.

Consider a typical mobile worker in a store or driving a truck. When the learner wants to ask a question, solve a problem, or learn something, they go to their device (perhaps a phone), and this device may have a local solution. The corporate AI system is integrated with the local content so the employee sees a localized answer. This "local agent" may translate content, version it for country-specific needs, etc.

Imagine a global distribution company that needs to train and support truck drivers in each country. A driver may have questions about policies, local routes, or how to handle a specific customer interaction—all in real time. The local L&D team can preload this information into these employees' AI agents, enabling corporate content to be discovered as part of the answer. This intelligent local agent gives companies enormous flexibility in localizing content.

In some cases, companies may centralize everything (similar to traditional learning models), but these local agents will become increasingly intelligent as they understand local needs. Administrators and designers can now look at detailed interactions at the local or global level to understand performance problems or local learning capability gaps.

Over time, this evolves into a performance improvement architecture. We are working with a call center-based travel company that plans to use the local LLM to record conversations, identify learning gaps for each agent, and deliver personalized tips and coaching support. This corporate corpus serves as a backup and source of structured curriculum to support this local system.

Beyond the Federated Model: L&D as an Enablement Function

Our research shows that these types of dynamic content systems will soon be available across many platforms, encouraging sales, operations, and other functions to buy them on their own. To prevent chaos and wasted effort, we believe the L&D team needs to reinvent its operating model, moving from what we previously called the "federated model"[11] to a more agile and strategic "enablement" function.

Traditionally, most companies use a federated model for training. A corporate team manages centralized investments (e.g., LMS, leadership programs, DEI, compliance), while the individual learning teams or L&D business partners work with functional leaders and geographies.

11 *The High-Impact Learning Organization*, Bersin & Associates, 2004.

This training approach has pros and cons. A local sales enablement group or manufacturing training group needs constantly updated programs as products, competitors, prices, and processes change. They have local SMEs, local processes, and myriad expertise pockets about how to onboard, certify, train, and enable employees. Without AI, the customization required to offer this learning support was inefficient.

A corporate L&D team understands the global or industry changes and may have one or many strategic corporatewide change programs to support. In some cases, companies build "academies" to support individual functions (JBA is dedicated to HR, for example) as a way to consolidate programs and provide mentoring, collaboration, and specialized skills to these audiences.

This traditional federated L&D model focused on scale, centralized control, and standardization. Large teams at HQ owned most activities, with learning seen as a support function. Content, tech, and priorities were directed from the top down—often disconnected from real-time business needs.

AI flips the traditional learning dynamic by introducing personalization, relevance, and speed, boldly enabling L&D to operate in a decentralized way and democratize learning (see Figure 7). Learning becomes decentralized, co-owned by HR, the business, and employees.

Superside, a creative services firm, has democratized access to self-authoring tools powered by Sana, sparking a cultural shift in how learning happens across the organization. Employees are now empowered to create and share their own courses and learning journeys. This approach allows its lean, centralized L&D team to serve as stewards of workforce enablement, focusing on learning technology strategy and enterprise-level priorities.

Transitioning from traditional federated models to a democratized and decentralized learning strategy requires strong leadership.

The Rise of a New Type of CLO

The CLO title became popular around 1994, when Jack Welch, then CEO of GE, was working to transform the company's bureaucracy. This C-level role was designed to help Welch transform GE's leadership and management practices, which were a huge priority at the time.

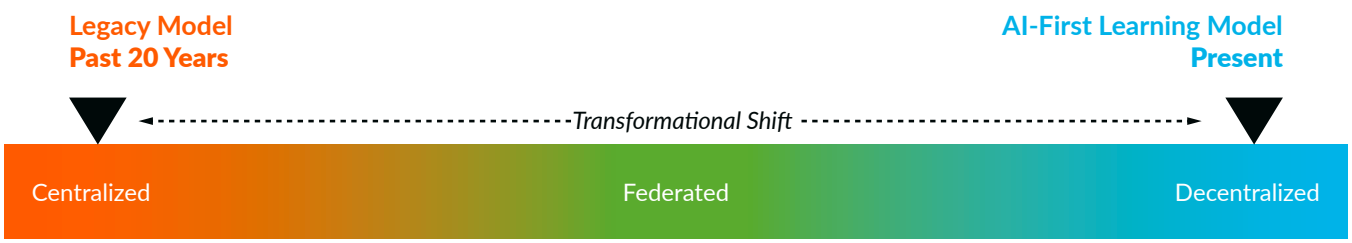
Since then, the CLO title has morphed and changed. Some CLOs report to the head of talent, some have a global role, some focus only on corporate programs, and others are simply L&D leaders with C-level titles.

In the early 2000s, CLOs were treated as true C-level executives. They were responsible for strategically leveraging vast knowledge management, career development, and technology projects to advance the company's growth ambitions. CLOs built corporate universities and credential programs and often worked directly with IT to build custom systems, all in alignment with the commercial and operational priorities of the organization.

Over time, however, the perceived value of the CLO role has diminished. Many CLOs now report to HR and are often two or three levels below the CHRO, which limits their impact and effectiveness. The centralized L&D function's value has decreased over the years, leading to a more distributed and federated training model.

In this new era, the role of the CLO is poised to rise to new levels of significance, akin to a phoenix emerging from the ashes. The modern CLO is envisioned as a tech-enabled, AI-savvy

Figure 7: From Legacy Learning Model to AI-First Learning Model



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

leader aligned with business and IT. This transformation allows CLOs to move beyond merely managing corporate learning "assets" to curating dynamic learning experiences that are responsive to the organization's evolving needs.

The advent of AI and other emerging technologies presents a new opportunity for CLOs to redefine their roles. CLOs can now focus on strategic upskilling, learning, performance support, and knowledge management. This shift positions the CLO as a pivotal figure in driving business transformation and aligning learning with talent and business strategy.

Rochana Golani, VP of Learning and Enablement at Databricks, embodies the modern evolution of the CLO. Reporting directly to a cofounder who oversees the field engineering organization, she leads a comprehensive enablement strategy that transcends traditional learning and development. Her close collaboration with marketing, professional services, and customer-facing teams ensures effective upskilling across the workforce, supporting Databricks' mission to lead in the data and AI industry.

Today's learning leaders are poised to redefine the CLO role, embracing the opportunity to lead and innovate in the dynamic corporate learning landscape.

L&D Built by AI: Performance-Driven, Up to Date, and Instantly Available

Whatever structure your company has today, the AI-first model enables many changes.

Content development can happen anywhere, forcing a more distributed L&D function. As our examples illustrate, once a company has an all-AI platform, any functional area can build its own "academy" or enablement programs.

The corpus of information used to build training can now be updated quickly. Sales enablement teams in pharmaceutical companies, for example, are experts in drug interactions and new drug features. That corpus can generate new courses in hours, enabling sales teams to stay current on new drugs or interactions.

Any individual in the company with their own AI assistant (e.g., Galileo®) can build their own corpus or learning material. This raises two important questions: Who manages access to what content? and How do we make sure all our courses are up to date?

Partnering with the AI Team

We have interviewed more than 20 organizations using the AI-first model. Unlike traditional L&D, which operates in HR, these teams are partnering with the "AI team" and working to integrate learning content into other AI platforms in the company.

As organizations roll out tools like Microsoft Copilot or Galileo, what once was considered training content is now a vital corporate asset—becoming part of the broader corpus of information being used by chatbots and employee or customer service agents.

This approach allows the L&D team to partner with IT, further empowering business units. One client explained how they use their corporate AI platform (Sana) to enable local operational teams to build whatever content they need. The corporate group builds templates, but each functional team has its own instance of the platform. This empowers the decentralized model like never before.

Another company uses AI agents to record customer service calls and automatically generate tips and recommendations for improvement. As part of this performance-based learning solution, the L&D team provides minicourses, suggestion cards, and other AI-generated content.

AI may be the most important L&D innovation in a century. Unlike many incremental innovations of the past (LXPs, skills libraries, massive open online courses [MOOCs], and more), AI gives us myriad ways to learn and teach. Our advice is to think big and let go of the past (see Figure 8 on the next page).

Figure 8: Corporate Learning in the Intelligence Age

Aspect	Corporate Learning the Old Way	Corporate Learning the New Way
Paradigm	Publish, launch, market, and assess skills	Enable every employee to become an exponential superworker
Content	Design, package, and launch courses, curricula, and programs	Use AI to generate content dynamically from sources, enabling employees to learn when and how they want
Technology	Lock the user interface into the LXP, LMS, portal, or learning platform	Let the AI platform deliver content anywhere: voice, chat, video, courses, or by AI tutor or coach
Business Focus	Arrange content into role-based learning, focusing high-level content for higher-level staff	Let individuals decide what they need to learn to improve their work, democratizing learning: executives can learn tech; technologists can become leaders
Operating Model	Function as a cost center, focused on service delivery, employee experience, net promoter, and utilization	Dynamically operate as a consulting function, quickly building solutions that meet urgent timely needs; focus on the business problem, not the content problem
Team Composition	Performance consultants aided by instructional designers, producers, and content experts	SMEs and businesspeople drive the solutions, with L&D staff serving as experts on dynamic content generation, standards, and scale
Delivery	In-person events, online courses, virtual in-person events, VR, and mobile courses	All of what has worked in the past, plus voice agents, chatbots, and personalized developmental experiences in the flow of work
Collaboration across HR	L&D operates independently, focusing on training delivery without deep integration into talent or business strategy	L&D collaborates with HR functions to align learning with talent and business strategy, driving workforce planning, talent mobility, and organizational transformation
Value to the Business	Upskilling, onboarding, leadership development, technical skills, company-specific compliance, operations, and functional skills	Hard-hitting business value solutions that mix learning with real-time knowledge management and performance support

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

Getting Started: Redefining Corporate Learning

How can companies move toward AI-first learning? Four key mandates lie ahead.

1. Modernize the learning tech stack with true AI-native solutions.

While most companies will not sunset their LMS and LXP for many years, the first step is to commit to an "AI-native" learning system for content development, deployment, and user experience.

These new systems, like Sana, integrate and go beyond the capabilities of LMS platforms, LXPs, authoring tools, and virtual learning classrooms. They enable L&D teams to dynamically build, launch, translate, and personalize content at an unprecedented pace and with unmatched quality.

Our research—and our experience at The Josh Bersin Company—show that the learning architecture of the future looks very different. Rather than having an LMS-based system with an LXP and many portals and other tools, the architecture focuses on the AI platform as the primary user experience, made accessible to employees by personal AI agents.

This new AI-powered platform architecture enables teams to generate adaptive content and arrange existing learning experiences into curricula, on-demand learning, and career outcome-based learning—all at a lower cost than what organizations typically spend today.

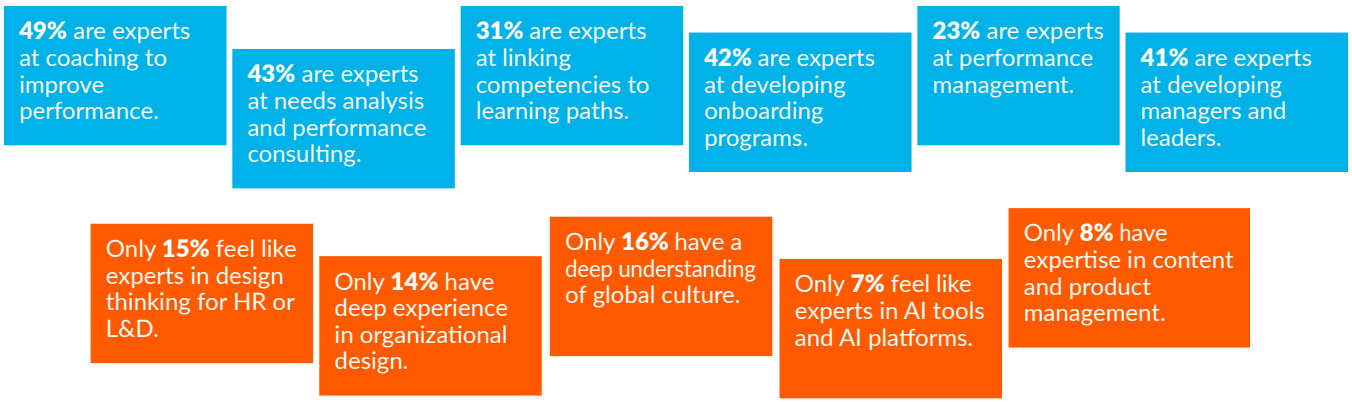
2. Upskill and transform the L&D team.

Our recent Corporate Learning research reveals a critical gap: fewer than one in five organizations prioritize building the capabilities of their own L&D teams. Insights from our HR Capability Project highlight some of these gaps (see Figure 9). This oversight threatens to stall transformation just when reinvention is needed most. If L&D is to lead the future of work, it must first become its own prototype.

Learning teams must embody the change they seek to create—powered by data, enabled by AI, and grounded in deep partnerships with the business. They must be guided by a clear sense of purpose and a commitment to building what's next, not just maintaining what is.

To lead this transformation, L&D teams must develop fluency in AI, analytics, and digital transformation to design smarter, faster, and more dynamic learning ecosystems. This also

Figure 9: Broadening L&D Capabilities Must Be a Priority



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

means learning how to use—and build—custom AI agents that automate routine tasks, enhance personalization, and extend the reach of learning solutions.

Equally important is nurturing human-centered capabilities like strategic consulting, change management, systems thinking, stakeholder influence, and culture shaping. L&D professionals must model the very capabilities they seek to build across the organization—learning at the speed of change and turning insight into action.

3. Position corporate learning as enablement, not training.

Once considered solely a "training" function, L&D is now empowered by AI to broaden its scope. L&D teams can now focus on the entire range of employee enablement—information access, skills development, operational questions and answers, and qualified or certified competencies (see Figure 10).

Working closely with IT, the AI-first L&D team helps deploy AI agents, chatbots, and longer-form learning curricula for employees at all levels. Now, rather than viewing "courses" and "training" as the primary solution, L&D can build programs that operate across the entire range of enablement.

A New Real-Time Model for Performance Consulting

Most L&D teams rely on learning business partners or consultants to interview line leaders, evaluate current quality and productivity programs, and build needs-based specifications for learning design. However, imagine an AI-powered learning platform that lets employees in each function (sales, for example) directly ask questions. This approach provides immediate answers and gives the L&D or learning team real-time data about information, knowledge, and skills gaps.

L&D still needs to study and design major programs for certain operational or compliance roles (e.g., healthcare, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, safety). However, beyond these compliance-driven programs, we will now have a near real-time view of learning and skills needs directly from employees (see Figure 11 on the next page).

One could also argue that surveys and other forms of input may become obsolete. Rather than survey employees to understand their learning needs, why not ask the AI platform to prompt users for needs and desires on various topics, and then use this information to design the next set of programs?

Figure 10: Corporate Learning in the Intelligence Age

Information	Process	Skills	Capabilities
"What is our policy for customer returns?"	"How do I process a customer return?"	"I am comfortable handling angry or disappointed customers."	"I can manage an entire range of customer inquiries and needs."
▪ Chatbot ▪ Placard ▪ Q&A system	▪ Process flow ▪ Chatbot ▪ Visual map ▪ Audio or video walkthrough	▪ Microlearning ▪ Video, podcast ▪ Exercise ▪ Simulation ▪ Assessment	▪ Course ▪ Curricula ▪ Certification ▪ Compliance evaluation ▪ Preceptor (tester)

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

Figure 11: How the L&D Revolution Will Play Out

	Content Generation	Learning Experience	Knowledge Management	Technology
What to Expect	Content will be generated dynamically and continually.	Each learner will see a different experience based on their history.	Knowledge management will merge with learning in functional areas.	User experiences will shift toward bots and conversations.
Future-Ready Imperatives	Content vendors must change, evolving their offerings to remain competitive.	Existing content and tools must merge from the LMS into the AI layer.	The need still exists for learning architecture and standards.	L&D must work with IT on AI policies, governance, and data.

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

4. Build a lean AI-powered L&D operating model.

An AI-first operating architecture streamlines headcount deployment and unifies work, learning, and knowledge management (see Figure 12 on the next page). Consisting of three tiers and supported by dynamic, AI-curated content libraries, it transforms L&D into a strategic enabler of performance at scale:

- **Tier 1—Enterprise Team:** At the highest level, a lean enterprise learning team aligns AI tools, learning tech, and IT infrastructure. This team is synchronized with the CHRO and CLO, curating a centralized repository of high-value content that's relevant for the entire organization—supporting organizational culture and enterprise priorities while ensuring consistency and compliance.
- **Tier 2—Functional and Regional:** Business leaders or learning professionals maintain documents and source files specific to functional areas, product lines, or regional markets. Learning content is actionable, context-aware, and aligned with business unit priorities.
- **Tier 3—Individuals and Teams:** At the foundation of the model, individual employees and teams take ownership of their learning. They dynamically publish content hyperpersonalized to their work, regularly contribute and capture their knowledge, and drive peer-to-peer enablement—fueling a culture of continuous growth, collaboration, and agility.

The AI-first learning organization shifts L&D from a content production function to a business enablement engine, focused on capability development, performance support, and strategic value creation. AI is not an incremental improvement; it represents a fundamental break from legacy constraints, enabling organizations to:

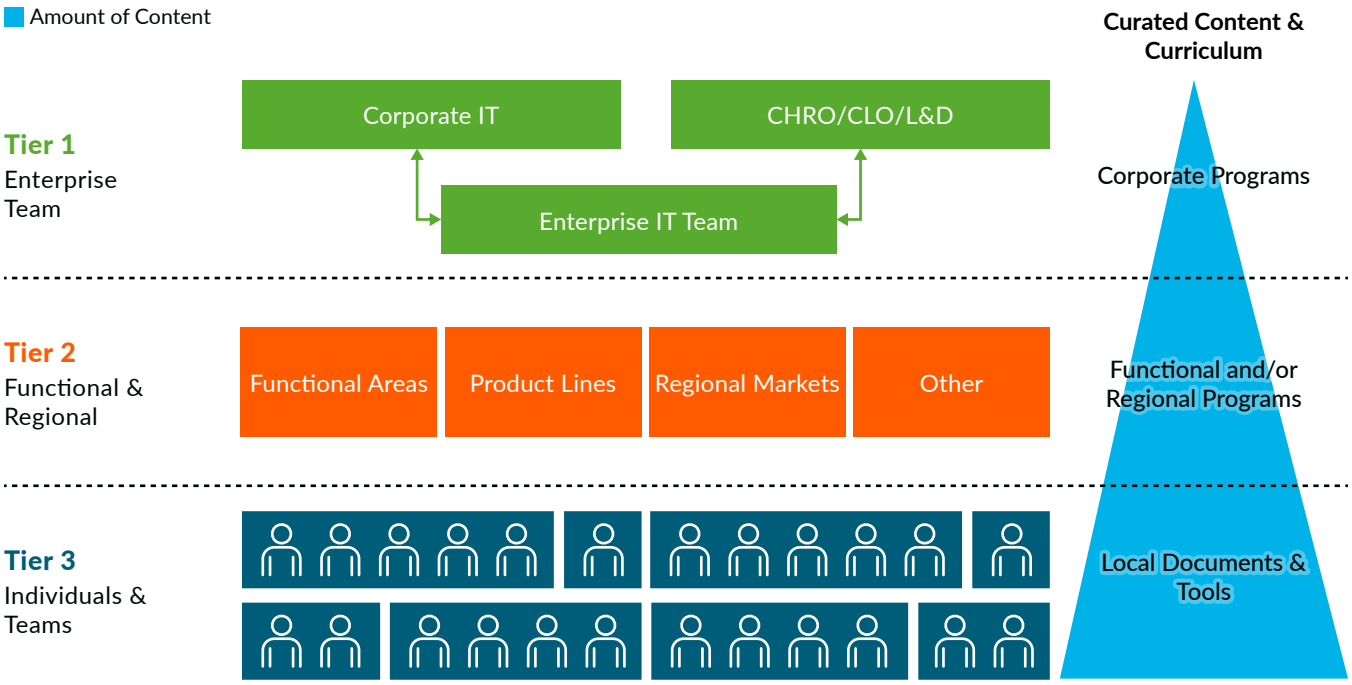
- Rethink instructional design and redesign roles
- Reduce content library spend and operating costs
- Redefine L&D as a problem-solving business function

Rethinking Instructional Design and Redesigning Roles

As we talk with industry pioneers, we hear startling statistics: one company reports a 70% or greater reduction in instructional designers; translation and media services are all but eliminated; and outsourced operations teams—responsible for course loading, analytics, and administration—are automated.

Platforms like Arist and Sana enable designers to import core content (e.g., product guides, pricing guides, research reports, sales tools) and automatically build course outlines. Once the outline is approved, the system builds an entire instructional program (with the length and level of interactivity specified) until it is ready to publish. Designers are "tweaking" experiences, not "designing" them.

Figure 12: AI-First Learning Organization



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2025

Moderna, for example, uses AI-powered tools like Synthesia and Dscript to build automated video learning that can be updated in minutes. The Josh Bersin Company uses Galileo Learn to produce on-demand podcasts and AI-powered tutors for every course. Rather than using AI to "build courses faster," we use it to "build courses automatically," enabling the instructional designer to become a prompt expert, modifying and tuning courses instead of building them.

Reducing Content Library Spend

AI disrupts the traditional model of investing in off-the-shelf course libraries. Trusted providers with high-value proprietary content (e.g., JBA, Harvard, IT providers) will still be in demand, but any form of "easily available" content may become more commoditized. Open-source tools and AI-generated resources allow companies to create their own custom content at scale—and at significantly lower cost.

Look at how vendors like Skillsoft, Pluralsight, Coursera, and Udemy have struggled to grow. Once companies and entrepreneurs gain access to AI-powered content-generation tools, building content will be easier than ever. Companies will be able to build their own courses from public domain content with minimal effort. In fact, Degreed just announced a large library of open content featuring 500 AI-developed "courses" crowdsourced from public domain best practices—all available at no cost.

As another example, our new platform Galileo Learn allows users to easily upload leadership models, interviews, and management tools to build a "leadership academy." The platform automatically integrates our research on leadership and agility to create a company-specific leadership academy. In some ways, every L&D department becomes an "automated content factory."

Traditional L&D operations—publishing, administration, analytics—are being rapidly replaced by intelligent systems and custom GPTs. Companies are already automating compliance tracking, onboarding, and content management without requiring IT support. L&D teams are now building their own AI agents to manage core functions, dramatically improving speed, scale, and accuracy.

Redefining L&D as a Problem-Solving Business Function

Rather than thinking of L&D as a cost center or simply a "corporate learning" function, companies must reposition it as a direct business support function, funded by the business itself, not just HR. In this mode, the L&D team works on day-to-day operational challenges, builds knowledge databases, and keeps all content current to help with learning, performance support, and companywide knowledge management needs. This means L&D is now tied to IT as well as the business, and its scope spans more broadly than just HR.

As L&D becomes more integrated with business operations, learning ROI becomes directly tied to business outcomes. For instance, a construction management software company, excels at aligning learning with business strategy by designing skills frameworks intricately tied to specific roles. Each skill is defined across one of four levels: beginner, approaching, proficient, or advanced.

By leveraging AI tools like Uplimit, this software company delivers scalable, personalized learning experiences focused on single-skill courses. The one-to-one alignment between each course and a specific skill ensures that learning experiences are linked to skill progression, enabling precise measurement of skill gap closures.

Superside measures the impact of learning through tangible business outcomes, such as AI adoption in customer projects and productivity improvements. For instance, after completing AI training, its creative teams reduced design creation time by up to 80%. This value is passed on to Superside's customers, reducing the number of creative hours they pay for.

By transforming efficiency gains into tangible customer benefits, Superside has strengthened its client relationships and business model.[12] This reinvention requires strong business leadership. The head of training or head of learning is now once again a true CLO—a strategic business partner across various business units. This leader may or may not be an HR or L&D executive—they may bring line leadership experience, IT experience, or other functional expertise to the role.

Conclusion

The era of incremental corporate learning is over. Despite significant investments, many organizations remain tethered to outdated models that fall short of driving meaningful business results. To break this cycle, learning must evolve—becoming dynamic, personalized, and deeply focused on enablement.

CLOs have a critical opportunity to reestablish themselves as enterprise leaders, not just of learning, but of workforce transformation. With AI as a catalyst, L&D can unlock new levels of efficiency, innovation, and strategic value—positioning itself at the heart of business growth and performance.

12 "Superside cuts design time by 80% and leads an AI revolution using Sana," Aki Friedrich/ Sana Labs, 2024.

Key Takeaways

- Despite massive investment, most companies are stuck with outdated learning models that fail to deliver real business impact.
- Learning must be dynamic, personalized, and focused on enablement.
- CLOs must reclaim their position as enterprise leaders—not just of learning, but of employee enablement.
- AI unlocks the potential to accelerate content creation, reduce costs, and eliminate operational inefficiencies—all while empowering L&D to take on a broader, more strategic role.

About the Authors

Josh Bersin

Josh founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. He expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership and became a recognized expert in the talent market. Josh sold the company to Deloitte in 2012 and was a partner in Bersin by Deloitte up until 2018.

In 2019, Josh founded the Josh Bersin Academy, a professional development academy that has become the "home for HR." In 2020, he put together a team of analysts and advisors who are now working with him to support and guide HR organizations from around the world under the umbrella of The Josh Bersin Company. He is frequently featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *Harvard Business Review*, *HR Executive*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CLO Magazine*. He is a popular blogger and has more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.

Jordan Hammerstad

Jordan is lead analyst at The Josh Bersin Company. Passionate about the intersection between behavioral sciences and the workplace, Jordan pursued a neuroscience degree before obtaining her master's in human resources and industrial relations from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She is a certified HR professional and brings experience from multiple industries including commercial real estate, industrial process solutions, higher education, transportation, and retail.

The Josh Bersin Company Membership

The Josh Bersin Company provides a wide range of research, tools, and advisory services to help HR leaders and professionals address the ever-evolving needs and challenges of today's workforce. We cover all topics in HR, HR technology, talent, and corporate learning, with a special focus on the professional development of HR teams.

Our corporate membership program provides HR leaders and teams with the skills, strategies, benchmarks, and insights to build cutting-edge HR and people strategies through research, assessments, professional development, exclusive events, and community. Corporate membership also includes access to Galileo®, the world's first AI-powered expert assistant specifically developed for HR. Trained on 25 years of The Josh Bersin Company's research, insights, and expertise and enriched by carefully curated material from our trusted content partners, Galileo unlocks information from over 50,000 verified assets to answer any HR-related question with timely and meaningful answers.

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