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Future-Proofing Your Workforce: 5 Critical Skills to Drive Success



Introduction

As organizations continue to face unprecedented change and volatility, they are under tremendous pressure to transform so they can survive and thrive.

Most organizations must improve a wide array of skills and competencies to meet the demands of a post-pandemic world that requires new levels of agility and resilience, according to *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills*¹ by Constellation Research. The report says the skills must address:

- New work environments
- Accelerated demands for digital transformation and automation
- A shortage of specialized talent
- And the need for faster upskilling and reskilling

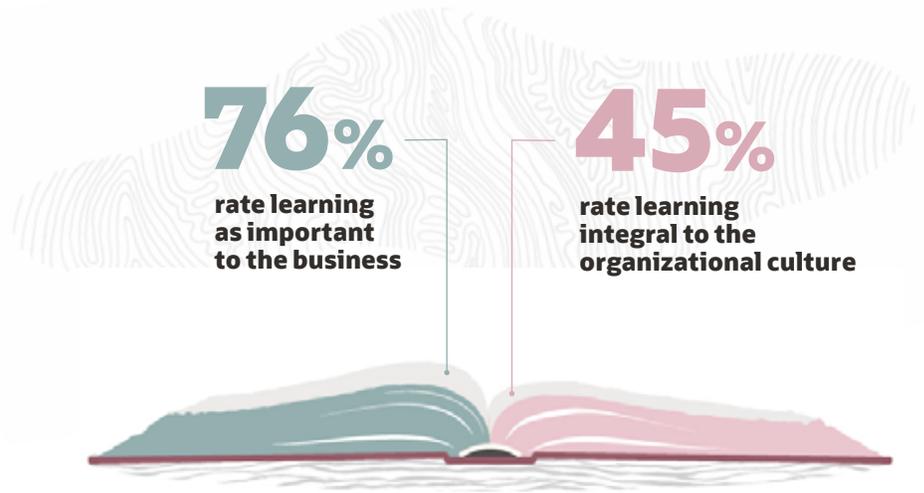
However, many employers are trying to adapt to the future of work while still operating with traditional learning, talent and workforce models, according to research by [Brandon Hall Group](#). The business environment is moving too fast and the workforce is too busy, distracted and now geographically disparate for those models to be effective.

Skills drive every talent process in an organization. Without having a full view of them within your organization—what you have, what’s being developed and where the gaps are—you can’t make the strategic decisions that support business agility.

¹ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

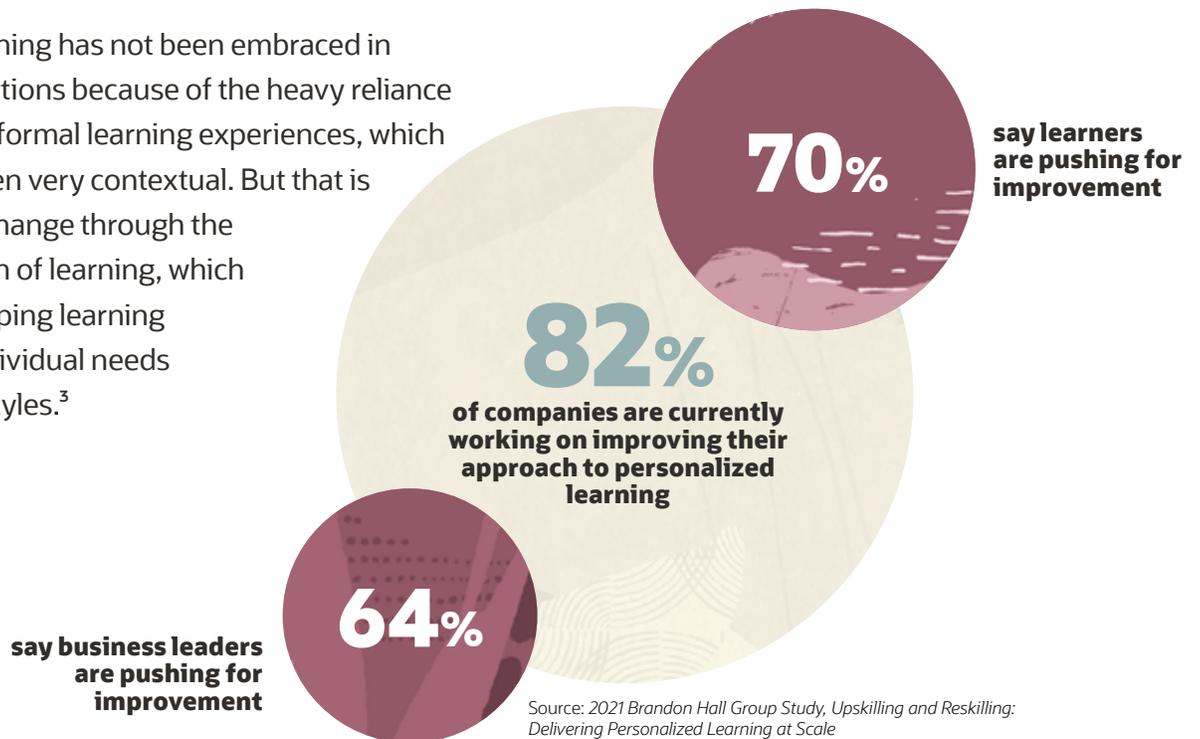
The Learning Gap

This skills gap elevates the strategic role of the learning function. But learning has traditionally taken a “one-size-fits-all” approach. That has left employers in a challenging spot.²



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group Study, *Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale*
Important and integral = rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

Corporate learning has not been embraced in many organizations because of the heavy reliance on traditional, formal learning experiences, which have never been very contextual. But that is beginning to change through the personalization of learning, which means developing learning targeted to individual needs and learning styles.³



Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group Study, *Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale*

^{2,3} *Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale*, Brandon Hall Group, 2021

As with any emerging initiative, there are many challenges to personalizing learning at scale. The biggest barriers are time and money, each cited by more than 80% of companies. But hurdles go far beyond that. Brandon Hall Group⁴ identified five critical challenges to the personalization of learning at scale and they are:



5 Critical* Challenges to Personalization of Learning at Scale

Challenge	Percentage of organizations responding
We have managers who are not very good coaches and don't know what their employees are learning or need to learn.	68%
We do not have the technology ecosystem in place to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.	60%
The organization believes a one-size-fits-all approach to learning is sufficient.	54%
We believe it would be too difficult to administer and maintain.	48%
Our learning organization is not trained properly to develop and deliver personalized learning at scale.	47%

Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group Study, Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale *Critical = Rating the challenge at 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

⁴ Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale, Brandon Hall Group, 2021

The Technology Gap



Even if organizations can improve managers' collaboration with employees and alignment between business needs and learning priorities, personalized learning designed to drive upskilling and reskilling requires a technology ecosystem that many employers still don't have.

Technology should identify needed skills for various roles, provide personalized skills recommendations and connect to learning opportunities. Those could range from courses to simulations, certifications, projects, temporary assignments and more.⁵



of organizations say it's important to leverage machine learning, AI and advanced analytics to build out personalized learning

Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group Study, *Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale* Important = Rating of 4 or 5 on 5-point scale

Beyond having a technology ecosystem that drives skills identification and development, the entire workforce must develop technology expertise to organize information, enhance thinking, communicate and collaborate with stakeholders, and produce products and services.⁶

Employees must also master communication skills across multiple digital technology platforms. Video, audio, text, websites, social media, augmented reality and even in-person communication all require different techniques and approaches. Brandon Hall Group's research shows that 81% of organizations believe technology expertise is critical or important.⁷

⁵ *Upskilling and Reskilling: Delivering Personalized Learning at Scale*, Brandon Hall Group, 2021

⁶ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

⁷ Brandon Hall Group Workplace Practices Post-COVID Study, 2021

Critical Skills that Empower Digital Proficiency

However, not all digital-age skills are technology-driven. The journey through digital transformation also requires enhanced human skills.⁸ Mastering these skills allows employees to incorporate them into behaviors needed to succeed in their current jobs and future roles.

Most Important* People Priorities Post-COVID

Priority	Percentage of organizations
Foster an inclusive workplace.	70%
Make employees feel valued.	69%
Create a strong sense of belonging.	68%
Determine the critical skills needed to drive future business growth.	67%
Assess and enable employee wellness/well-being.	65%

Source: 2021 Brandon Hall Group Workplace Practices Post-COVID Study, 2021 *Importance rated as 4 or 5 on a 5 point scale



Let's take a high-level look at five major skill sets that will drive success:

⁸ How to Drive Talent Mobility for Rapid Evolution of Your Organization, Brandon Hall Group, 2021

1. Dynamic, Inclusive Leadership

Creating responsive and responsible leadership is a hallmark for success in digital transformation.⁹ Brandon Hall Group found that many organizations are transforming their culture from top-down leadership to inclusive leadership.¹⁰ It is the foundation for leveraging the diverse capabilities and experiences of the workforce to drive organizations forward in a hypercompetitive business environment.

Fostering an inclusive workplace is the most important people strategy in 2021.

Traits of inclusive leadership include:

- Being aware of one's biases and preferences
- Actively seeking and considering diverse views and perspectives to inform better decision-making
- Demonstrating commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Exhibiting humility
- Curiosity about others
- Exhibiting cultural intelligence
- Demonstrating and championing collaboration

Source: Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study 2021

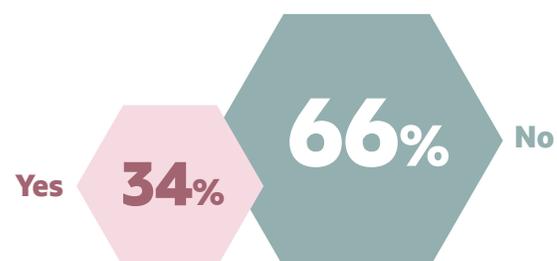
Inclusive leadership requires the development of behaviors that need reinforcement and practice.¹¹ But most leadership development is classroom-focused and many organizations don't provide leaders with time for self-reflection or targeted skill exercises they can do quickly as time allows through sophisticated learning technology. Therefore, most organizations don't believe their LD programs have a significant impact on the business.

Benchmarks for Inclusive Leadership

Action/Status	Percentage of organizations
Developing inclusive leaders is important or critical to our organization.	71%
Our leaders demonstrate the traits of inclusive leadership to a high degree.	48%
Our training on inclusive leadership is effective/very effective.	32%

Source: Brandon Hall Group Study, *How to Develop Inclusive Leaders: An Inside Look*, 2021

Have Your Leadership Development Programs Significantly Improved Your Organization's Ability to Meet Business Objectives?



Source: Brandon Hall Group Impact of Leadership Development Study, 2020

⁹ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

¹⁰ Brandon Hall Group Study, *How to Develop Inclusive Leaders: An Inside Look*, 2021

¹¹ Brandon Hall Group Impact of Leadership Development Study, 2020

2. Teamwork and Collaboration

Teams are the future of work. When functioning well, they enable the collaboration needed to solve complex challenges by bringing together people with complementary skills and diverse points of view and experiences.¹² The Constellation Research report concurs, saying “collaboration tools paired with open-mindedness, long-term thinking, adaptability, program management, feedback and rules of engagement can help improve inclusion of ideas and efficient output.”¹³

However, true teamwork—rather than individuals working in groups—is not intuitive to most people. Team development is critical to realize the power of collaborative teams. Unfortunately, 40% of organizations don’t even have a team development program. Of those that do, only 30% say they are effective.¹⁴

There are several barriers to improving team development:

73%

Competing priorities

42%

Lack of budget/investment

41%

Unclear on how to measure impact

Source: Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2020



¹² Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2020

¹³ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

¹⁴ Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2020

In interviews with Brandon Hall Group, two-thirds of organizations indicated that teams are not functioning as intended. Most people interviewed said they are getting the work done, however:

- Team members are often not selected for their complementary skills.
- Team members often are not actively engaged.
- Team leaders often are operating by traditional command-and-control principles rather than inclusive and collaborative leadership needed to leverage the strengths of teams.¹⁵

In other words, many teams are really groups of individuals rather than truly high-functioning teams. Most organizations do not truly understand the kind of team skills needed to succeed in the future of work. This could be mitigated by skills assessments and using technology to match people with deficits in team skills with learning opportunities and coaching. That requires technology that many organizations don't have.

“ In 77% of organizations, at least half of work is accomplished in some sort of team, 2021 Brandon Hall Group team development research shows. The work done in teams is expected to increase in the next two years in 65% of those organizations. ”

Source: Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2020

¹⁵ Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2020, and qualitative interviews with selected respondents, 2021

3. Data and Analytics

Data is the foundation of digital business, The Constellation Research report asserts: “All levels of workers should be able to ask the right questions of data and machines, build knowledge, make decisions and communicate meaning to fellow employees, partners, suppliers and customers.”¹⁶

Traditionally, many key decisions—particularly concerning development, repositioning and reskilling the workforce—are subjective and vulnerable to bias.

Brandon Hall Group research shows that even when talent decisions are data-driven, 70% take a retrospective approach—trying to understand what has already happened.¹⁷

The full potential of data can’t be realized until more organizations leverage it to determine what is likely to happen or what should happen based on the business situation and objectives.

The use of data must evolve from



descriptive (what happened)
and diagnostic (why it happened)

to predictive (what might happen)
and prescriptive (what should happen)

This cannot be achieved until sophisticated talent analytics becomes part of an organization’s DNA.

For many employers, that requires developing skills in the use of technology and analyzing, manipulating, sharing and communicating through data. Most employers understand the importance of data but struggle with proficiency.

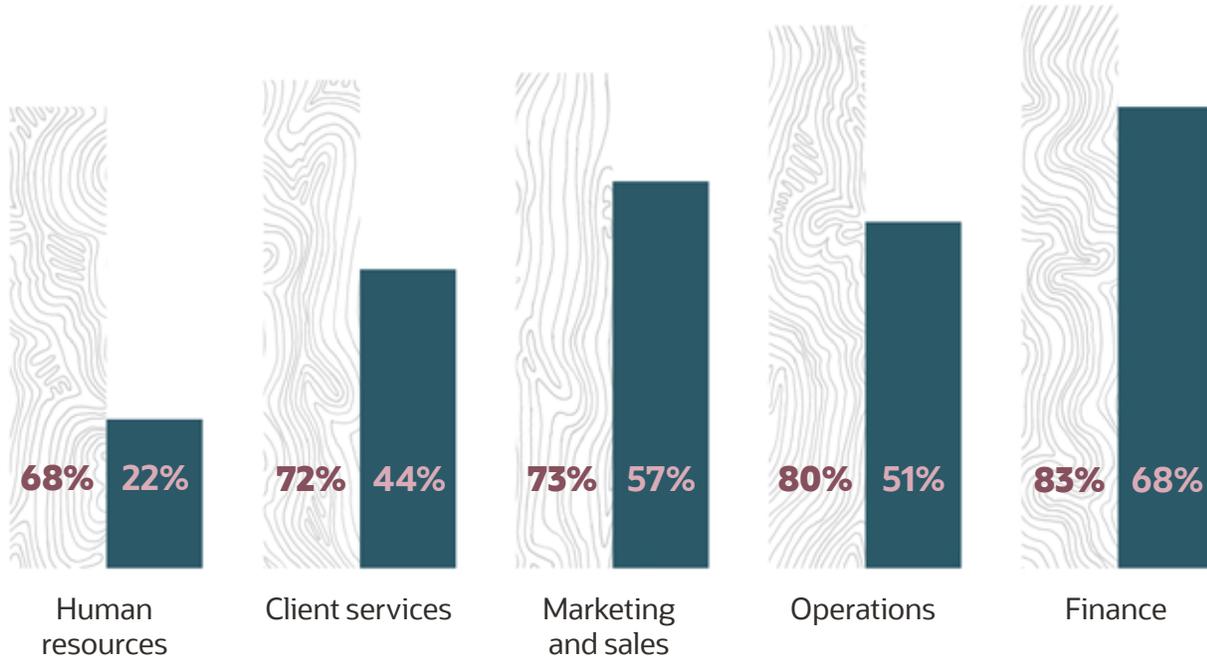


¹⁶ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021
¹⁷ Brandon Hall Group People, Data and Analytics Study, 2021

Data and Analytics: Importance vs. Proficiency in Different Functions

Importance of data analysis
Importance = Rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

High proficiency of data analysis
*High proficiency = Rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale



Source: Brandon Hall Group Team Development Study, 2021

For example, many HCM teams track and analyze metrics using key performance indicators such as engagement rates, retention rates and time-to-proficiency. Data-driven organizations go far beyond that. Their HCM teams are curious, critical thinkers willing to ask tough questions about the organization’s talent needs.¹⁸ For example:

“Why are elite job candidates not choosing us more often?”

“Why are we losing so many new hires within the first year of employment?”

“Why don’t more employees take advantage of learning opportunities?”

Then they dig into data to glean insights that help the organization find solutions to their talent challenges. Employers need skilled professionals—beyond data scientists—willing to disrupt the status quo and think creatively about how business challenges are solved. That requires the ability to leverage data and analytics to forge innovation.

¹⁸ Brandon Hall Group People, Data and Analytics Study, 2021

4. Talent Mobility

Retaining critical talent was ranked as the top talent management priority for 2021.¹⁹ Retaining talent means developing agile, resilient employees with the capability to fill critical roles and having the motivation to advance their careers within the organization.²⁰ Talent mobility is critical for employers to stay competitive because specialized talent is in short supply and the competition for those people in the job market is fierce.

Top Barriers* to Talent Mobility

- Defining new skills or capabilities needed in the years ahead
- Developing compelling development opportunities for top talent
- Retaining top talent
- Determining which roles are critical to delivering business value
- Building sufficient pipeline of internal candidates for critical roles that are defined
- Building sufficient pipeline of future leaders
- Improving the diversity in the workforce
- Get business leaders to actively engage, motivate and nurture business-critical talent

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group Talent Risks Study
*Barriers cited by at least 80% of respondents

Unfortunately,
90%
of organizations
say that lack of
talent mobility is a
significant risk to
the business.²¹



Many companies lack the technology to align skills to business needs. That makes it difficult to use those skills to support key growth initiatives or even recommend relevant career growth opportunities to employees. This leaves the organization open to the loss of valuable talent.

¹⁹ Brandon Hall Group HCM Outlook Study, 2021

²⁰ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

²¹ Brandon Hall Group Talent Risks Study, 2020

5. Career Management

Adding to talent mobility challenges, employers tend to be one-dimensional in their approach to career development. As the Constellation Research report states, organizations “should proactively engage employees to discuss their career plans.”²²

However, only about one-third of organizations in Brandon Hall Group’s career management study agree with this statement.



“We believe an employee’s personal aspirations are as important as the organization’s needs when considering career advancement.”

Those organizations are 3.6 times more likely to have effective career-development programs than those that believe the organization’s priorities are more important.²³

Effectiveness in driving career development also depends on technology that empowers employees to take ownership of their own careers.²⁴

²² *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021
^{23,24} *Career Development: Are You Considering What Employees Want?* Brandon Hall Group, 2021

Data and Analytics: Importance vs. Proficiency in Different Functions

Initiative	Development Program is Effective/Highly Effective*	Career Development Program is Less than Effective**
Organization has self-service resources, including websites or apps, that enable employees to own their career planning.	75%	41%
Technology can match employees to teams and projects that can aid their professional development.	45%	14%
Technology enables employees to visualize career opportunities and options for moving forward.	40%	14%

Source: Career Development: Are You Considering What Employees Want? Brandon Hall Group, 2021
 *Importance = Rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale **High proficiency = Rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale

The key to effective career management in the digital age is an organizational commitment to make career development mutually beneficial. Over time, ongoing career discussions and development lead to the talent mobility organizations need to be competitive and meet ever-evolving business needs.

Conclusion

With market conditions rapidly changing, leaders must find ways to ensure that employees have the required skill sets and competencies to succeed in their jobs. Success will require HR functions to sense demand signals for new skills, develop new skills in real-time to support changing needs, encourage employees to quickly gain new skill sets, determine which skills and competencies to remove from the portfolio, and automate the process for augmentation with AI.²⁵

For more detailed information on the development of dynamic skills and future-proofing your workforce, please visit [Oracle Dynamic Skills](#).

²⁵ *The Business Case for Dynamic Skills: Understand the Skills You Need to Survive and Thrive in an Age That Demands Resiliency*, Constellation Research, 2021

Work Made Human

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