



2017

LEARNING & REMEMBERING REPORT

by Steven Boller



| Bottom-Line Performance

“How do I help my learners succeed?”

It’s a question trainers often ask themselves. While stakeholders are motivated by the business goals they hope to achieve through training, like increased sales or decreased safety incidents, the best trainers are motivated by a desire to see their learners succeed. It’s why they got into training in the first place.

While helping learners might be our aspiration, reality has a habit of getting in the way. Training time is short. Budgets are tight. And stakeholders are skeptical of training’s costs.

If our goal is to improve performance and change behaviors through training, we need a clear picture of both present realities and future possibilities. That’s why we created this Learning and Remembering Report. Specifically, we wanted to understand:

- What knowledge and skills do trainers think are most important to their learners?
- What challenges make it hard to help learners acquire the necessary knowledge and skills?
- How are organizations actually delivering training in 2017?
- What new or developing learning trends are trainers excited about?
- If trainers could remove a roadblock or change one thing in 2017, what would it be?

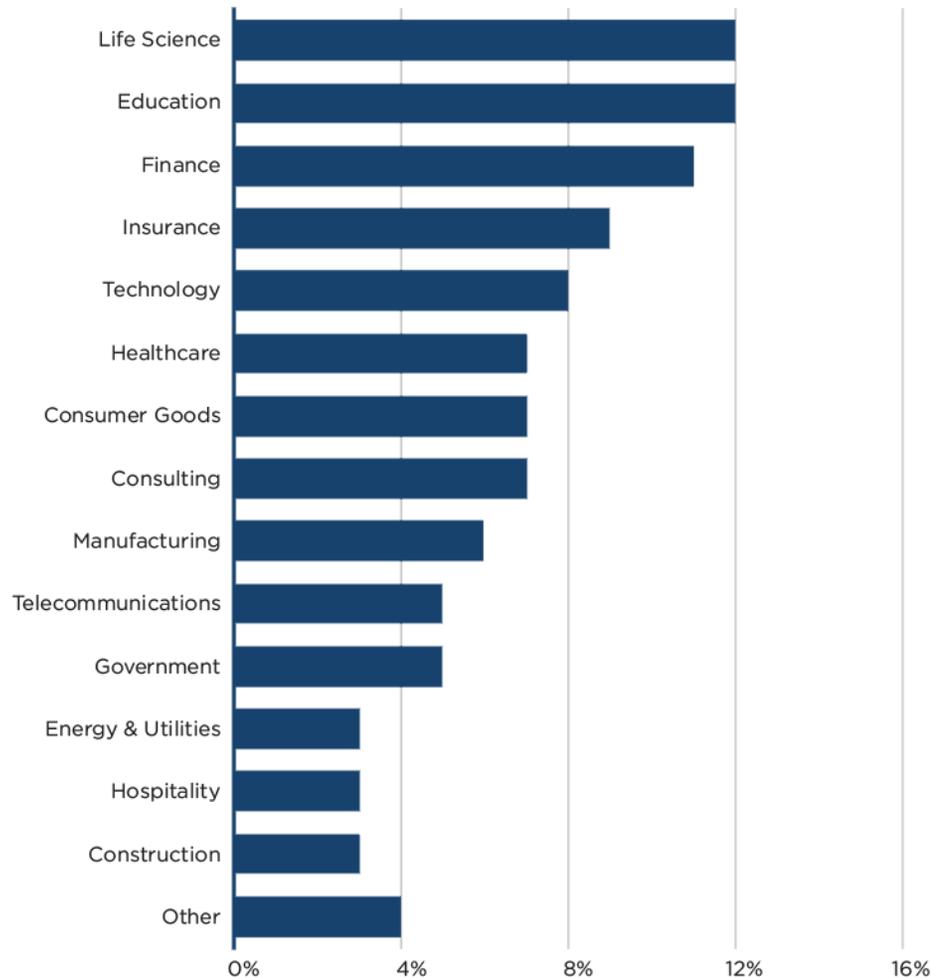
The resulting report shows what learning leaders are doing today (not just what they wish they were doing) and what they think will happen in the years to come. I hope it helps you create better training in 2017.



About the Report

This report is simply a snapshot. Its results are best understood alongside other industry reports, such as those put out by ATD and the Brandon Hall Group. That being said, the results certainly align with the anecdotal evidence we see as we work with clients.

Industries Represented



To gather our data, we sent a short survey to BLP clients and other learning professionals who subscribe to our various newsletters. The survey was open from 1/18/17 to 2/2/17 and had 150 responses.

While some survey questions were “select all that apply,” most were open-ended so participants could share their perspectives without being influenced by the answer choices we had created. We took the raw responses and put them into meaningful categories that emerged based on the responses given. If respondents said both “stakeholders” and “lack of time for training” were holding them back, we counted this as one response in each category.

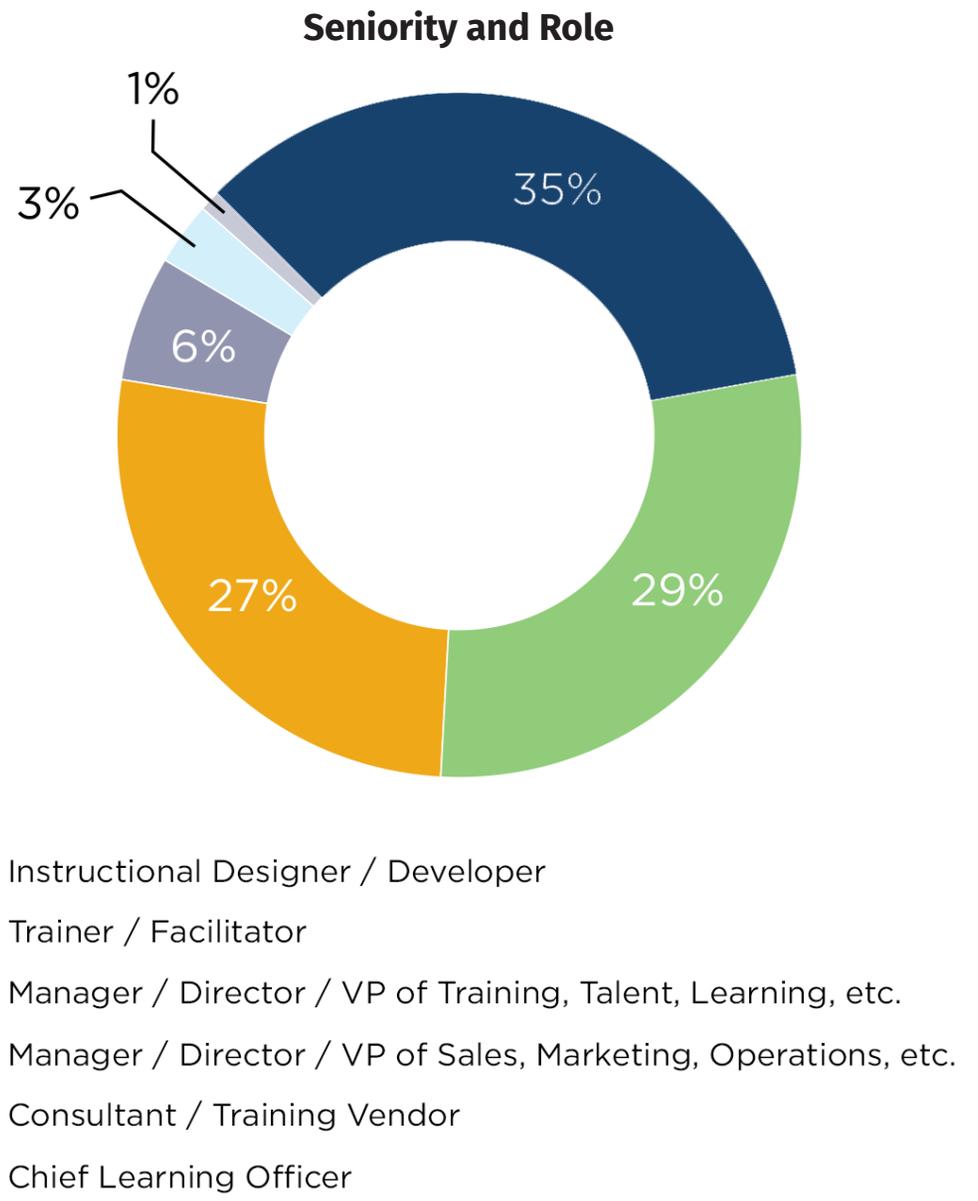
Since we sent the survey to our existing clients and contacts, the breakdown of respondents reflects the industries and company sizes we frequently work with. For example, life science (pharmaceutical, medical device and biotech) and healthcare companies are overrepresented in the results. The majority of respondents work at Fortune 1000 or larger organizations.

A large number of internal trainers at higher education institutions also participated, likely because of their interest in the survey topic.

Otherwise, industry representation was broad and balanced.

Who Responded?

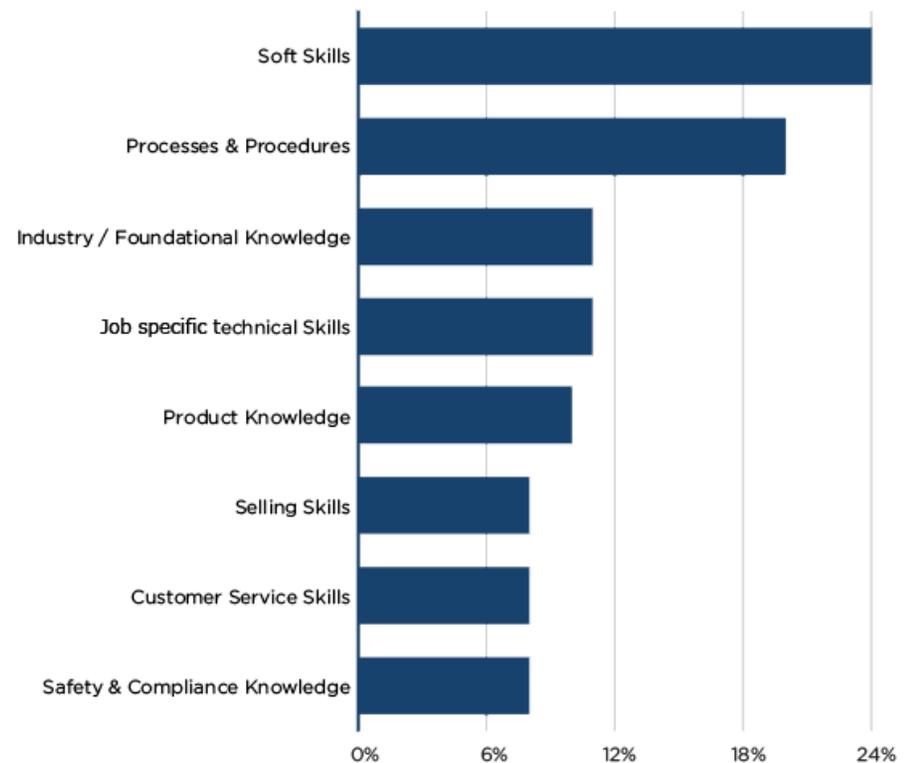
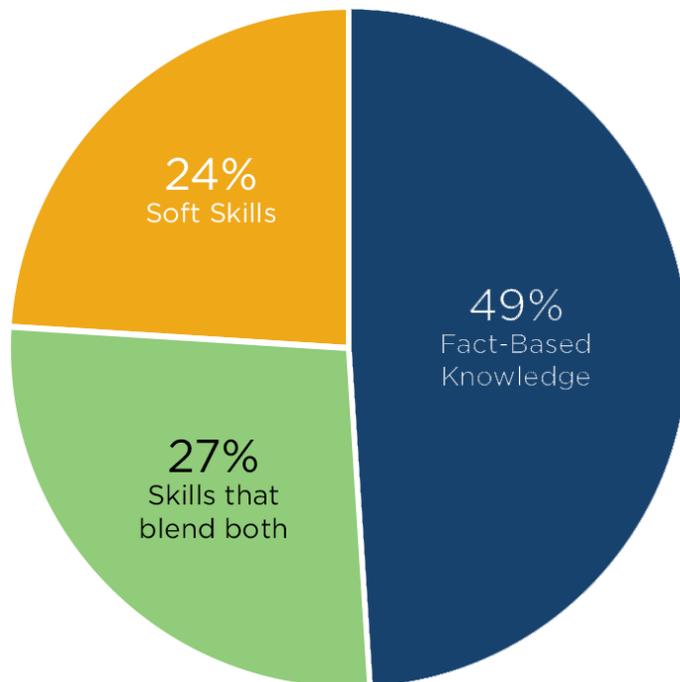
While nearly two thirds of respondents are instructional designers or trainers who develop or facilitate training themselves, this is somewhat balanced by the other one third of respondents who either manage a training team or lead another function such as sales or operations.



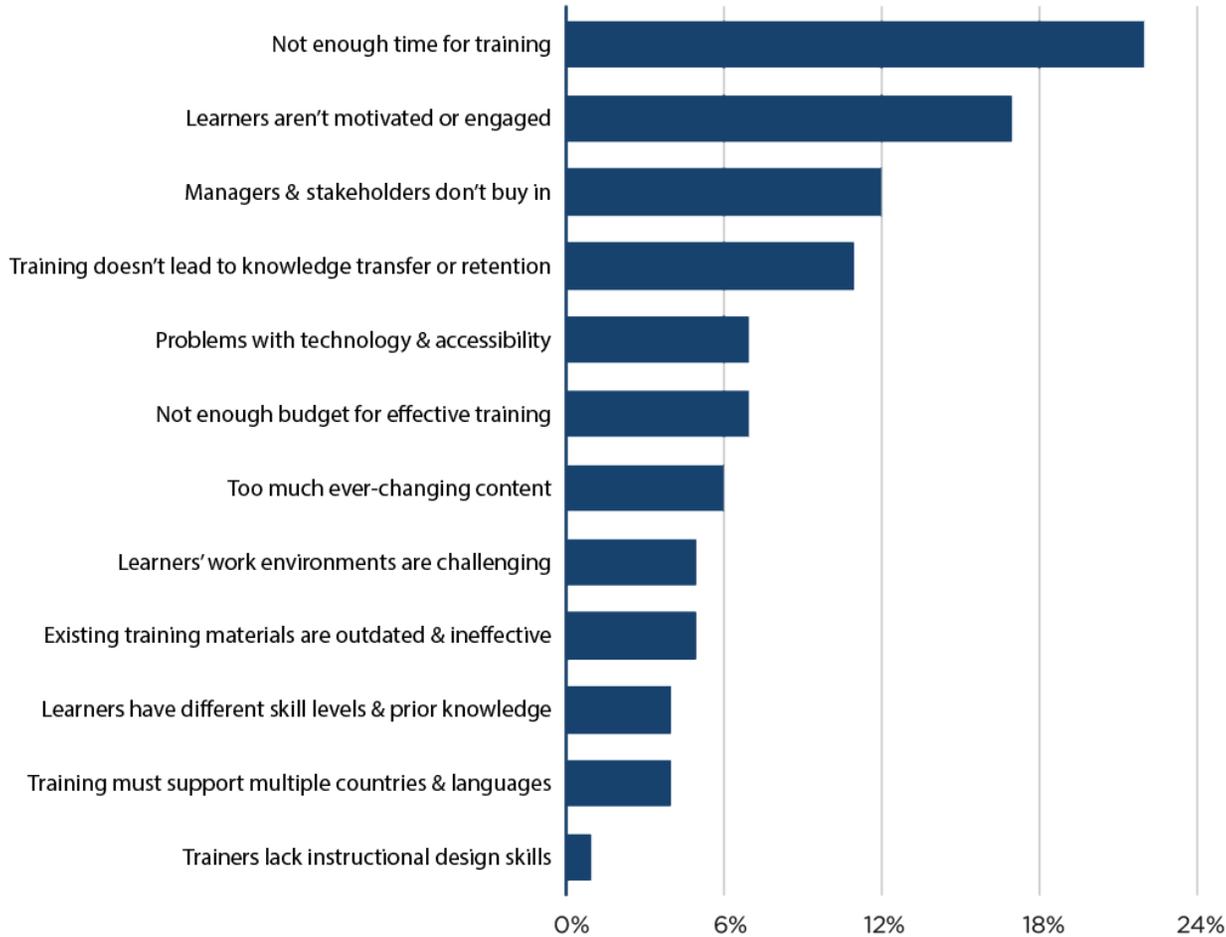
What knowledge and/or skills do the employees you train need to have to be successful in their jobs?

Almost half of respondents mentioned some form of fact-based knowledge as most important for learners. But while knowledge of products, processes and procedures ranked highly, general soft skills were also mentioned often. Other popular categories, such as selling and customer service skills, often blend soft skills and fact-based knowledge together.

Here is a breakdown of all the categories respondents mentioned:



What challenges do you face when you try to help these employees build the necessary knowledge/skills?



The challenges to training that respondents shared are highly interrelated. For example, lack of time to either create effective training or participate in training could lead to low learner engagement and lack of knowledge transfer. And since this often leads to poor results, managers are unlikely to support future training endeavors. Without this support, the budget and buy-in needed to do training right are hard to come by.

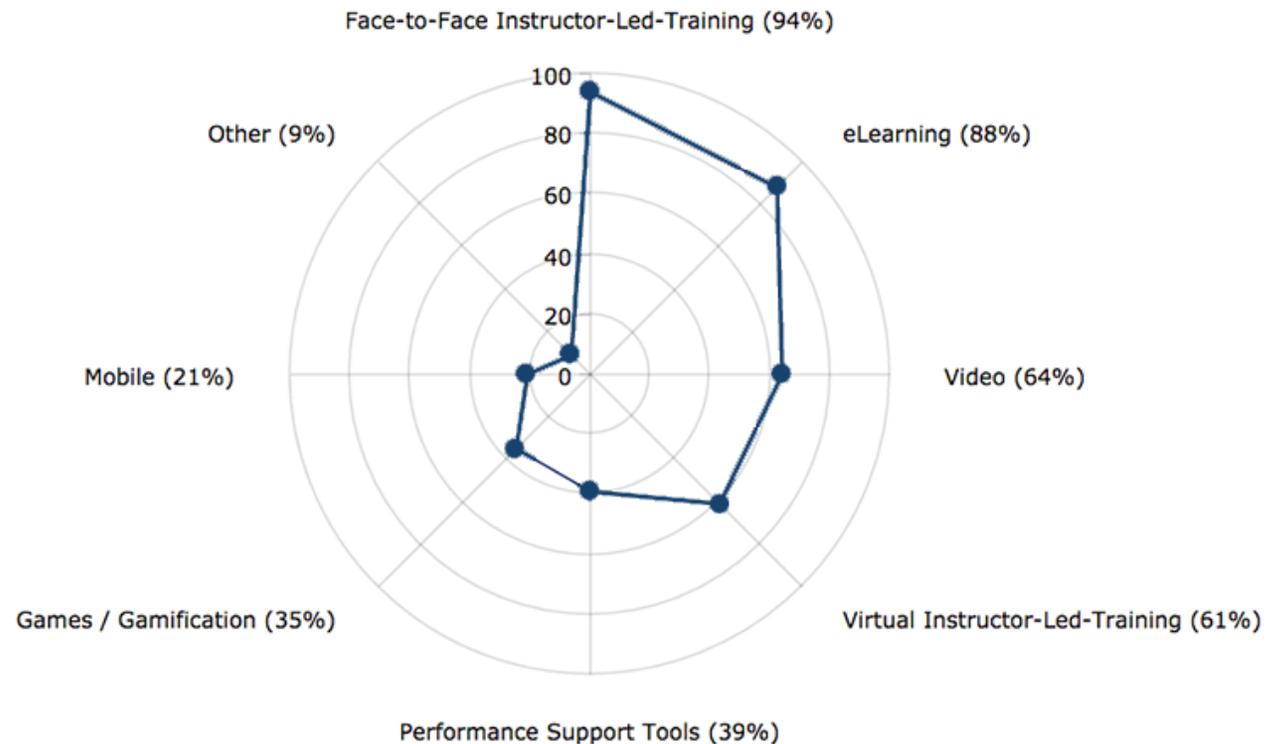
Challenges with technology and accessibility of training were also frequently mentioned. While learners might prefer a more “anytime, anywhere” approach to learning, the L&D department struggles to put the tools and technologies in place to make it happen. The IT department and existing mobile device usage policies are often roadblocks to mobile learning adoption.

What methods will you (or your organization) use to deliver training in 2017?

The distribution of responses in our survey matched the industry-wide consensus: the overwhelming majority of organizations use a **blended learning strategy** to deliver training. This likely comes as no surprise to you. eLearning is often the method of choice for the fact-based knowledge we mentioned above. Instructor-led training (ILT) and other interpersonal activities are the standard go-to for helping learners build soft skills.

Today's blended learning almost always includes ILT and eLearning, and it may include video, webinars, performance support tools, games and mobile apps. The overwhelming majority of organizations **(94%) are using ILT**, while a small but growing minority are incorporating **games and gamification (35%)** and/or **mobile learning (21%)** into their strategies.

While learning trends reports can make it seem like other organizations have left the classroom behind for greener pastures, this data shows that ILT and eLearning are still the primary training tools organizations use. Consider how near-term trends like mobile and long-term trends like virtual reality will supplement and enhance these existing approaches, not replace them.

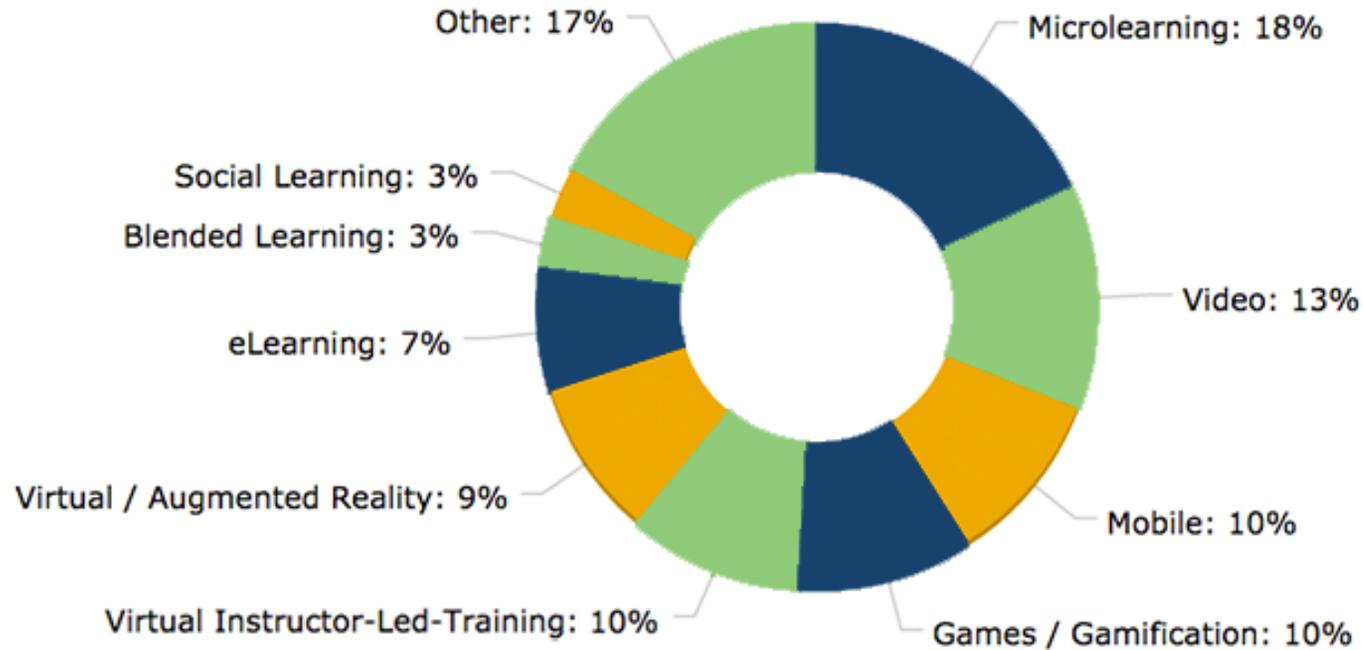


What learning trend(s) or new training delivery method(s) are you most excited about for 2017?

This question created the most confusion among respondents. **Microlearning** was the most frequently mentioned trend. Video has seen increased interest in the last year or two, perhaps because quality, ease of creation and bandwidth are all much improved. Game-based learning, gamification, mobile and augmented/virtual reality all made the list, of course.

I was surprised at the wide variety of responses we received, and by the number of respondents who said they “did not know” what trend they were excited about. When we grouped the trends that only received one or two responses with the “don’t know” responses, we ended up with our second largest overall category.

If you are unsure what learning trend is most exciting or applicable, it seems you are in good company.





If you could improve ONE thing about learning & development and/or training at your organization in 2017, what would it be?

This question was perhaps the most open-ended, and it received a wide variety of responses. Many respondents were most concerned with improving the design of their training. They often mentioned a desire to make it more engaging in some way:

“Have enough time to develop groundbreaking and engaging training.”

“I would like to find new ways to make the learning more engaging.”

“Technology! We don’t use many resources that would make learning fun and engaging.”

“I hope to make it more fun and engaging for learners.”

“Improving the tools/technologies that surround engagement of your learners and allowing them to personalize their learning.”

Others wanted to improve the technology they use to deliver training, whether that meant a new intranet or an improved LMS.

“Implement a more robust LMS.”

“Our system for monitoring and tracking who has what training isn’t up to date and makes it difficult to maintain compliance.”

“Get innovations of the IT tools available within our highly secure IT ‘bubble.’”

“I would love for there to be a platform for employees to easily access secure/confidential information outside of the LMS.”

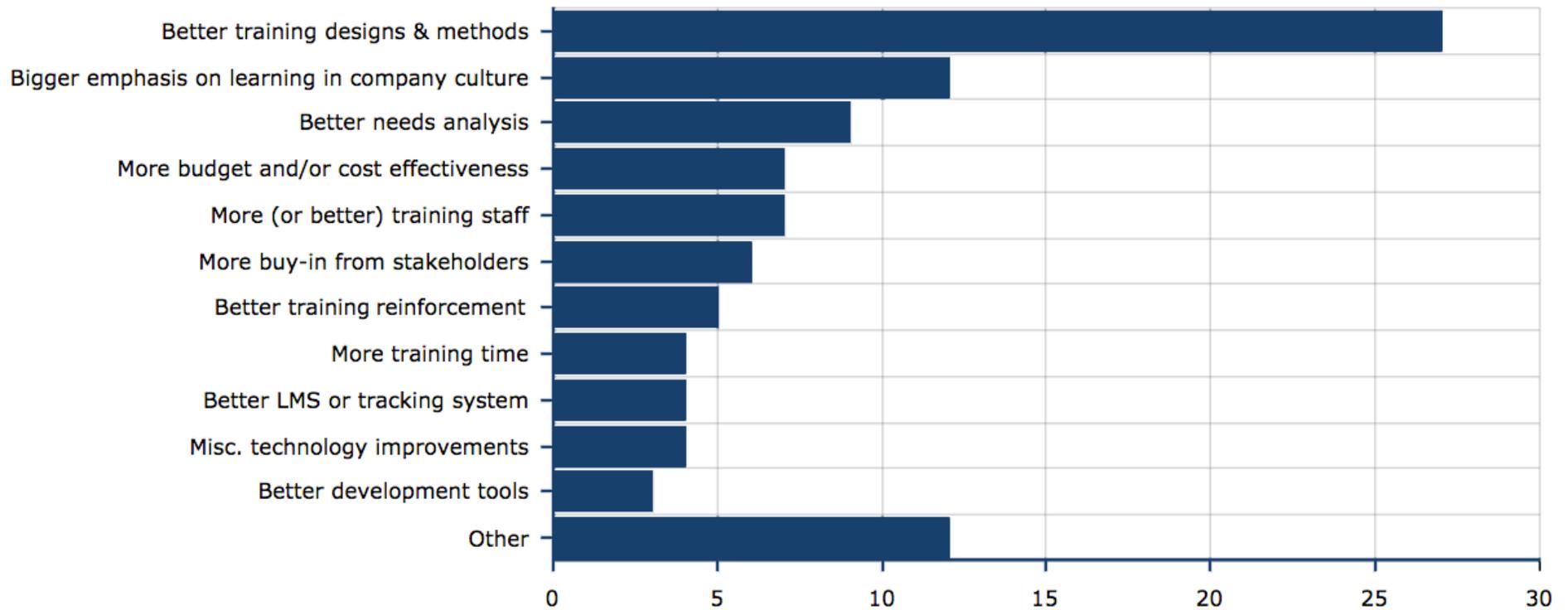
“Consistency and solid use of technology so that it enhances training without making it too difficult to use or glitchy.”

“We need a new Talent Management System that has a data warehouse and can store employee competencies and career roadmaps. The cost is prohibitive at this point.”



Some respondents took a big picture focus. They wanted to either improve their company culture to make learning a bigger part of it or to make more time for effective needs analysis to influence and improve their designs.

If you could improve ONE thing about learning & development and/or training at your organization in 2017, what would it be?



Takeaways

When taken together, these survey results show that learning professionals know what learners need to know or do to be successful, yet face a variety of challenges that make it hard to help them do so. They are committed to a set of existing tools for delivering training, and they may or may not have a clear picture of how new learning trends and technologies will make a difference for them. Yet many of these trainers *do* have clear ideas for how their existing approaches could be improved.

Here are my takeaways:

- 1. Blended learning is the norm, not the exception.** Survey respondents said that learners need a blend of fact-based knowledge and soft skills to be successful. The blended nature of today's training programs reflects this. There are many existing examples of how face-to-face training programs help build soft skills, and plenty of opportunities to use mobile, games, video and other trends to build on these programs. Learning science, when well applied, can make electronic learning more effective for learning and remembering facts.
- 2. Most of the challenges that prevent organizations from delivering effective training are tied to proving value and showing results.** If managers saw training as valuable, they would devote more time to it. If stakeholders saw the return on their investment, they would devote the budget needed to create effective training that both engages learners and ensures knowledge transfer. Trainers must take time to consult with these individuals to achieve a shared vision of success through training.
- 3. ILT and eLearning still have staying power.** 94% of respondents are using instructor-led training in 2017. 88% are using eLearning. It's difficult to imagine these delivery methods going anywhere in the near future. But that doesn't mean they aren't changing and improving all the time.
- 4. New "learning trends" are in most cases enhancing, not replacing, the tried and true.** These days, we often find ourselves incorporating a board game into an instructor-led course or adding gamified elements to an eLearning course. Microlearning concepts can be applied with or without mobile devices. Sometimes, all you really need is a new approach to existing training methods.
- 5. Analysis and design can fix problems before they happen.** I agree with the 9% of respondents who specifically said they wanted to make more time for analysis in 2017. Analysis might not always be in the budget, but when done properly, it can help surface the challenges and opportunities that are just under the surface. Analysis and discovery help us see which challenge is really the root cause and devise an effective solution.



About Bottom-Line Performance

Since 1995, BLP has helped organizations create the right learning solution. Whether you have a complex problem to solve, product to launch, or process to implement, our in-house team partners with you every step of the way to design for your desired outcome and develop the right mix of tools: web and mobile apps, eLearning, serious games and gamification, video, and highly interactive instructor-led training to name a few. The end result? Award-winning solutions that solve problems, inspire people to act, and help people learn.



About Steven Boller

Steven Boller is the Director of Marketing at Bottom-Line Performance. In this role, he gathers industry intelligence from organizations interested in improving the performance of their employees through instructionally sound learning solutions and innovative approaches such as game-based learning and retention-driven learning strategies.



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