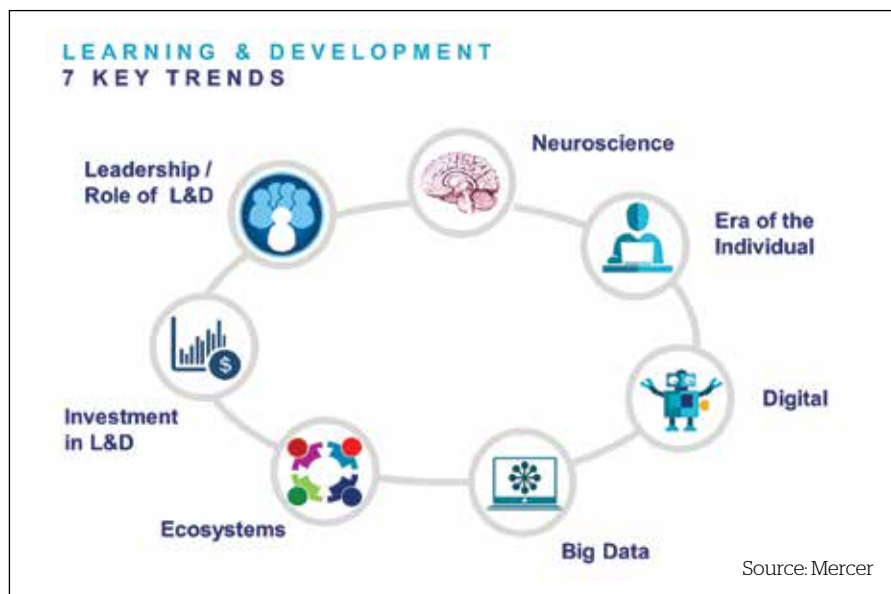


KEY TRENDS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

BY ANDREW FLETCHER
AND EPHRAIM SPEHRER-PATRICK



The world is evolving rapidly. Learning and development professionals risk being left behind the pace of change unless they can adapt their skill set to ensure their continued relevance and survival in this new environment. Here are seven key trends Mercer has identified as part of the *2016 Mercer Global Talent Trends Study*, which need to be considered holistically to deliver meaningful results into the future.

Development in Neuroscience

Have you ever entered a room only to forget why you are there?

Despite all the progress in scientific discovery, the human brain has evolved very little in the past 10,000 years. Science has helped us understand how the brain learns and retains information, and how the environment where we learn impacts our knowledge retention. One aspect of recent neuroscience research called the Doorway Effect suggests that 80% of our short-term memory is lost when we change location such as walking through a door into another space. Studies have shown that similar results occur when changing from one technological device to another.

So what does this mean for learning

and development within organisations? The location and environment in which learning occurs has a significant bearing on an individual's short- to long-term memory. Being aware the brain wants to forget will impact where optimal training should take place. Yet, it is often overlooked as part of the holistic learning experience.

Era of the Individual

One thing that science repeatedly demonstrates is that everyone's brain works differently. In spite of this, there's been a prevailing desire to categorise people into recognisable, typically generational, groups such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Post-Millennials. While conventional, this grouping is no longer functional. We are now living in a world where the sum of what differentiates us from others in the same age group is greater than the sum of our shared experiences.

Organisations are recognising this and successfully shifting from an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) for job families or level based cohorts, to an Individualised Value Proposition (IVP) for each employee. An IVP approach embraces the employee's specific learning needs and aligns them to career development outcomes that will be mutually beneficial.

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is omnipresent in senior leadership discussions when it comes to future-proofing organisations for survival and growth. As new technology redefines the way we work, it also changes the way we learn.

Organisations that incorporate digital micro-learning can provide tailored training situations to clearly defined learning cohorts rapidly. By embracing digital as part of an employee's everyday experience, this helps to reinforce an organisational commitment to a learning culture.

Traditional learning and development roles have been impacted greatly by social platforms and devices allowing people to collaborate quickly and often outside of traditional means. Organisations facilitating and embracing digital learning techniques for all employees are also broadening the opportunity to leverage everyone's knowledge as a part of regular learning.

Big Data

Big data is a common buzz phrase that many organisations talk about but rarely use effectively. Only 10% of organisations leverage predictive analytics today, according to the study. Less than one in five organisations in Australia report that they are currently leveraging advanced workforce analytics on a regular basis.

An evidence-based approach to insights will become the norm for training decisions, which makes exploring and understanding data two critical skills required within the learning ecosystem.

Ecosystems

The classical employment model of hiring permanent employees to manage work activities is breaking down as employee preferences change. Organisations need to leverage capabilities beyond traditional talent pools, which are now far broader than just the people sitting under the same roof.

As talent ecosystems grow, the scope of learning and development needs to grow also. Outside of the internal talent

pool there are many people involved in the delivery of an organisation's offering.

Relationships with freelancers, external partners, crowdsources or even collaboration with competitors are often considered outside of traditional responsibility. Considering educating all elements making up the talent value chain helps avoid pockets of educational neglect, while also unlocking often overlooked opportunities that education and discussion create.

A key challenge for learning and development is to determine the extent and responsibility of learning by considering talent ecosystems and asking "What will be the impact on our clients if we do not engage in education?"

Investment in Learning and Development

The 2016 Mercer Global Talent Trends Study highlighted that "82% of organisations plan to develop and promote from within", while a separate report from Degreed, an education and technology company that tracks on individual's learning, states that "only 23% of employees had completed a course at their company in the last two years". Despite more resources being provided within organisations, fewer employees are experiencing learning and development organised learning.

An organisation's learning and development team needs to look at ways it can increase its usage by more employees, but more importantly how it can increase its relevancy across the whole organisation.

Fortunately both employees and employers want the same thing, an alignment of skills. This alignment can be seen from the top three in-demand skills from the Study, as both employees and employers identified developing leadership, analytical and coaching/people development skills as the main priorities.

Leadership and the Role of Learning and Development

As a priority, conversation between HR and executives needs to occur

regularly to establish a relationship of trust. Executives are looking to develop holistic value-adding initiatives, and many current learning and development offerings from HR are not seen as doing this well enough.

The Study indicates that over 60% of organisations' learning budgets are held within HR, but only 4% of HR professionals view their relationship as strategic. This should be a wakeup call to fix a very apparent misalignment of values.

Learning and development transformation is not just HR's responsibility. The CEO and executive team also play a critical role. In fact, if learning and development could do this independently, then many more organisations would have done so by now.

If transformation is to occur, information and tools are required, but to drive real change it has to be an enterprise-wide commitment, sponsored and championed from the top.

Impactful learning and development in organisations is the result of a successful joint venture between the executive team, line managers, HR and the learning and development experts that form such a critical component of the HR team.

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Andrew Fletcher is the Pacific Learning Leader for Mercer. Contact via: <https://au.linkedin.com/in/andrewfletchermelbourne>

Ephraim Spehrer-Patrick is the Leader of Workforce Strategies and Organisational Performance in the Pacific and Europe for Mercer.