

RESEARCH REPORT / 2026 FIELD GUIDE

The 2026 State of HR & Learning

The signals reshaping work, skills, and development, translated into decisions you can make this quarter.

Forecasts and survey findings are directional, not guarantees. This report makes the caveats visible and turns the evidence into an operating plan.

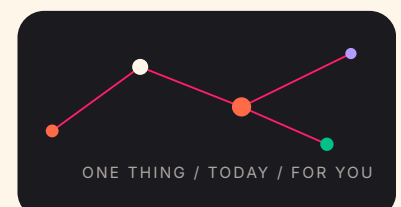
FOR HR AND L&D LEADERS

Report

10 pages

16-min read

6 source documents



EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Skills demand is accelerating faster than the learning system

The 2026 problem is not a shortage of content. It is the gap between changing work, limited learning access, manager capacity, and proof that capability improved.

39%

of workers' core skills expected to change by 2030

An employer forecast, not an observed outcome.

HR1: World Economic Forum, 2025

59 / 100

workers expected to need training by 2030

Eleven may not receive the training they need.

HR1: World Economic Forum, 2025

20%

of employees globally engaged in 2025

Manager engagement stood at 22%.

HR5: Gallup, 2026

11%

planning their workforce three or more years ahead

From McKinsey's 2026 HR Monitor sample.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

Five shifts to design for now

- Skills planning is becoming continuous because roles and tasks are moving before annual planning cycles catch up.
- Training demand exceeds access, so protected time and manager follow-through matter as much as content quality.
- Career development and learning are converging into one mobility system.
- Managers are the delivery bottleneck for practice, feedback, and transfer into work.
- AI raises both capacity pressure and the need for role-specific judgment, verification, and safe-use skills.

Evidence: HR1: World Economic Forum (2025) / HR2: LinkedIn Learning (2025) / HR3: McKinsey & Company (2026) / HR4: Deloitte (2025) / HR6: Microsoft WorkLab (2025)

LEADERSHIP QUESTION

What is your learning system optimized to prove?

If the answer is completions or hours, the operating model is still measuring delivery. The 2026 bar is evidence that a critical behavior changed and improved a business outcome.

DECISION Choose one business-critical capability and build the full evidence chain before adding another content library.

WORKFORCE MATH

The 100-worker training picture

WEF's employer forecast makes the access problem tangible. The right response is a portfolio of build, buy, borrow, redeploy, and work-redesign decisions.

WORKERS	EXPECTED PATH BY 2030	PLANNING IMPLICATION
41	No significant training need forecast	Keep evidence current; do not assume stability
29	Upskilled in their current role	Map changing tasks and practice in the flow of work
19	Reskilled and redeployed	Connect learning to a named destination role
11	Need training but may not receive it	Treat access as a workforce risk with an owner

Employer expectations. The four groups sum to a 100-worker illustration.

Evidence: HR1: World Economic Forum (2025)

Portfolio rules

- Build when the capability is recurring, differentiating, and learnable within the available runway.
- Buy when the need is urgent and external hiring supply is credible.
- Borrow when demand is temporary, specialized, or project-bound.
- Redeploy when adjacent skills and a clear destination role make the move realistic.
- Redesign work when the old task no longer creates enough value to justify training it.

Capability decision card

Business scenario and critical outcome

Role and tasks most affected

Capability gap and current evidence

Build, buy, borrow, redeploy, or redesign decision

Owner, decision date, and proof required

Omie working template. Replace every field with verified organizational data.

DECISION A training request is incomplete until it names the workforce decision it supports.

CAPABILITY PLANNING

Move from headcount plans to capability plans

A role count says how many people you have. A capability plan says what work must be done, which skills it requires, where supply sits, and how the gap will close.

63%

cite skills gaps as a major transformation barrier

WEF employer survey.

HR1: World Economic Forum, 2025

85%

expect to prioritize workforce upskilling

Employer strategy through 2030.

HR1: World Economic Forum, 2025

23%

estimated to lack at least some current-role skills

HR estimate in McKinsey's 2026 sample.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

22%

doubt they will have the skills to remain in-role

Employee view over the next five years.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

FIELD	QUESTION	EVIDENCE
Scenario	What market or technology change are we planning for?	Named assumption and review date
Work	Which tasks grow, shrink, or move to AI?	Task inventory and workflow data
Supply	Who can perform the future work today?	Recent work evidence, not title alone
Demand	How much capability is needed and by when?	Range with explicit assumptions
Intervention	What closes the gap fastest and safely?	Build, buy, borrow, redeploy, redesign

Omie recommended quarterly operating loop

- 1 Sense**
Refresh business scenarios, work changes, and critical capabilities.
- 2 Prioritize**
Rank gaps by business criticality, coverage risk, and time to close.
- 3 Act**
Assign a portfolio action, owner, evidence standard, and review gate.
- 4 Learn**
Compare expected and observed change, then update the plan.

DECISION Treat capability planning as a quarterly decision loop, not a yearly spreadsheet refresh.

ACCESS AND TRANSFER

Close the participation and feedback gap

Learning fails quietly when employees lack time, real-work practice, feedback, or a visible path from training to opportunity.

24%

reported no employer training in the prior year

Employee responses across McKinsey's sample.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

3.4 vs 6.2

training days reported by employees versus HR

A perception and measurement gap.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

1 in 5

had no career or feedback session in 12 months

Employee-reported experience.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

58%

received formal feedback only once or twice a year

Too sparse for a rapid skill loop.

HR3: McKinsey & Company, 2026

The capability loop

- 1 **Acquire**
Learn a small concept tied to a current task and decision.
- 2 **Practise**
Rehearse safely with a realistic constraint and quality rubric.
- 3 **Apply**
Use the behavior in real work where the outcome matters.
- 4 **Receive feedback**
Get specific evidence from a manager, peer, customer, or system event.
- 5 **Prove**
Save a work product or observable result that supports the next decision.

Program design gate

- ☐ Protected time exists inside the work week.
- ☐ Every concept has a real-work practice opportunity.
- ☐ A manager or peer owns follow-up feedback.
- ☐ The learner knows what evidence demonstrates proficiency.
- ☐ A business measure is named before launch.

DECISION Measure the lived learning loop, not the content volume made available.

CAREER INFRASTRUCTURE

Make development visible, connected, and movable

Career development becomes useful when employees can see what to learn, where to practise, how to prove it, and which opportunity it unlocks.

36%

qualified as career-development champions

LinkedIn's maturity grouping.

HR2: LinkedIn Learning, 2025

31%

reported limited adoption

Programs exist but are not broadly connected.

HR2: LinkedIn Learning, 2025

33%

had no initiatives or were just starting

The least mature group.

HR2: LinkedIn Learning, 2025

91%

say continuous learning matters more than ever

L&D professional sentiment.

HR2: LinkedIn Learning, 2025

STAGE	EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE	OPERATING MOVE
1. Isolated	Courses exist but paths and evidence are unclear	Name critical skills and destination roles
2. Adopted	Programs reach people but sit apart from work	Add practice, manager follow-up, and proof
3. Connected	Learning links to roles and internal opportunity	Expose skill evidence and mobility rules
4. Business-linked	Capability moves with strategy and workforce plans	Review outcomes and redeployment quarterly

Omie working maturity model, not an external benchmark.

Employee path test

What can this person learn next?

Where can they practise it in real work?

What evidence will demonstrate the skill?

Which role, project, or responsibility can it unlock?

DECISION Career development is learning infrastructure only when capability evidence changes access to opportunity.

MANAGER SYSTEM

Managers are the delivery system for skill transfer

Managers translate business priorities into practice, feedback, and work design. Most organizations recognize this, but few have changed the role enough.

73%

recognize the need to reinvent the manager role

Deloitte global survey.

HR4: Deloitte, 2025

7%

report great progress on that reinvention

A wide recognition-to-action gap.

HR4: Deloitte, 2025

40% / 13%

time on immediate problems versus developing people

Approximate manager time allocation.

HR4: Deloitte, 2025

36%

felt unprepared for the people-manager role

Manager self-report.

HR4: Deloitte, 2025

MANAGER ROLE	WEEKLY BEHAVIOR	EVIDENCE
Coach	Ask for the learner's diagnosis before giving an answer	Action and follow-up recorded
Work designer	Create a safe stretch task tied to a real outcome	Work product and quality rubric
Change translator	Explain what is changing, why, and what good looks like	Team can restate priorities and risks
Skill signaler	Name observed behavior and the next repetition	Specific feedback linked to a skill

Omie recommended monthly development conversation

- ☐ Which business outcome matters most this month?
- ☐ Which behavior would move it?
- ☐ Where can the person practise it safely?
- ☐ What evidence will you both review?
- ☐ What obstacle must the manager remove?

DECISION Do not add development expectations without removing work friction and creating manager capacity.

AI AND WORK DESIGN

Train against redesigned work, not a generic AI tool tour

Capacity pressure is real, but broad AI awareness does not create role readiness. Map tasks, human judgment, risks, and evidence before choosing learning.

53%

of leaders say productivity must increase

Microsoft 2025 Work Trend Index.

HR6: Microsoft WorkLab, 2025

80%

of workers say they lack time or energy

A global knowledge-worker signal.

HR6: Microsoft WorkLab, 2025

47%

rank upskilling as a top workforce strategy

Leader priority for the next 12 to 18 months.

HR6: Microsoft WorkLab, 2025

49%

say executives worry skills cannot execute strategy

L&D and HR professional survey.

HR2: LinkedIn Learning, 2025

TASK	AI CONTRIBUTION	HUMAN JUDGMENT	READINESS EVIDENCE
Research brief	Collect and structure source material	Relevance, provenance, uncertainty	Annotated source trail
Customer message	Draft variants from approved context	Accuracy, tone, promise risk	Reviewer-approved final message
Decision analysis	Test options and summarize tradeoffs	Assumptions, ethics, accountable choice	Decision log with checks
Workflow action	Execute an approved repeatable step	Stop conditions and exception handling	Audit trail and sampled review

Role-based learning brief

- ☐ Name the job outcome and approved tools.
- ☐ Classify data and prohibited uses.
- ☐ Teach known failure modes and verification.
- ☐ Practise with real but safe work.
- ☐ Assess a work product, not confidence alone.

DECISION AI learning becomes useful when a person can perform one approved workflow with evidence, judgment, and a clear stop condition.

OPERATING PLAN

A 90-day capability reset

Use a narrow pilot to create a reusable operating system. The cadence below is an Omie working framework, not a research benchmark.

CAPABILITY	BASELINE QUESTION	QUARTER-END EVIDENCE
Planning	How far ahead do capability decisions look?	Named scenarios and quarterly refresh
Taxonomy	Are critical skills defined and owned?	Versioned definitions with evidence rules
Access	Who needs learning but cannot reach it?	Protected time and participation by cohort
Feedback	How often does evidence-rich feedback occur?	Observed cadence and quality sample
Managers	Can managers coach and create practice?	Manager behavior and learner work products
Mobility	Can proven skills unlock opportunity?	Internal moves and destination paths
AI readiness	Are role workflows mapped and safe?	Scenario assessment and incident review
Outcomes	Which business measure should move?	Baseline, comparison, and decision memo

Omie recommended cadence

- Days 1-30: baseline**
Choose one capability, map the work, gather current evidence, and name the business measure.
- Days 31-60: pilot**
Run learning, real-work practice, manager feedback, and evidence capture with one cohort.
- Days 61-90: decide**
Compare results, inspect gaps and bias, then scale, revise, stop, or test again.

BOARD-READY OUTPUT

One page, one decision

State the business problem, behavior, cohort, evidence, cost, observed outcome, uncertainty, and requested decision. Leave completions in the appendix.

DECISION The goal of the first 90 days is not platform rollout. It is a credible capability loop that earns the right to scale.

SOURCES AND METHOD

Named evidence, visible caveats

Every external numeric claim in this guide points to one of these 2024–2026 sources. Forecasts, self-reported surveys, associations, and illustrative examples are labelled so they are not mistaken for causal proof or universal benchmarks.

HR1

The Future of Jobs Report 2025

World Economic Forum / 2025

Employer forecasts. See skills outlook and workforce strategies.
reports.weforum.org

HR4

Global Human Capital Trends: What's the Future of Management?

Deloitte / 2025

Global survey findings on manager role design, time, and readiness.
deloitte.com

HR2

Workplace Learning Report 2025: The Rise of Career Champions

LinkedIn Learning / 2025

Survey of L&D and HR professionals plus learners. Associations are not causal proof.
business.linkedin.com

HR5

State of the Global Workplace 2026: Global Data Summary

Gallup / 2026

2025 global engagement and wellbeing data published in 2026.
gallup.com

HR3

HR Monitor 2026: A Turning Point for the People Function

McKinsey & Company / 2026

HR and employee surveys across ten countries, with a strong European emphasis.
mckinsey.com

HR6

Work Trend Index Annual Report: Executive Summary

Microsoft WorkLab / 2025

Survey plus Microsoft 365 signals. Knowledge-work context may not generalize to every role.
cdn-dynmedia-1.microsoft.com

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Use the worksheets as decision scaffolds, then replace every recommended default and illustrative value with your own verified data. Recheck time-sensitive claims before publishing them outside your organization.