TOWARDS MATURITY

IN-FOCUS REPORT

Building staff engagement

The role of technology-enabled learning in building staff engagement

This report has been written by Towards Maturity, building on its extensive benchmark research since 2003 with over 3500 organisations.

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Acteon
communication and learning

IN-F⚲CUS REPORT

Foreword by Matthew Borg, Acteon

Learning professionals well placed to deliver staff engagement

An engaged workforce – one that is 'bought in' to where the organisation is headed and feels it's making a contribution – is happier, delivers better customer service, innovates faster, and generally performs at a higher level. Needless to say, organisations want engaged workers, and I believe workers want to feel engaged in their work.

I also believe learning and development is well placed to improve engagement in the workplace. When the polling company Gallup measures engagement within an organisation, they look for people like this:

- People who know what is expected of them,
- People who have what they need to do their work right,
- People who have someone at work who encourages their development,
- People who have opportunities at work to learn and grow,
- People who feel their job is important, and
- People who have colleagues who are committed to doing quality work.

Learning technology can help business leaders put the right tools and resources at the fingertips of the people who want to grow their own skills and capabilities, and in turn, improve the business. **This report is about how you build engagement with your technology-supported learning, with the ultimate goal of building a more committed, skilled and engaged workforce.**

For 34 years Acteon has been providing learning technology solutions created to empower staff and transform organisations. We've seen that real impact is possible when senior leaders are clear about the direction of the organisation, when line managers are motivated and equipped to develop and encourage staff, and when staff members at all levels have access to training, tools and clear communication to help them do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Learning and Development professionals are well-placed to be key enablers of staff engagement. Focusing on the 'seven habits' described in this report has helped our Learning and Development clients transform their businesses and win a record number of E-learning Awards over the years.

Acteon is pleased to partner with Towards Maturity in supporting this InFocus Report on such a key factor in successful e-learning implementations. We hope this report will inspire you to better enable your colleagues to engage with learning technology and realise their potential, and in turn, the potential of your organisation.

Matthew Borg
Managing Partner
Acteon Communication and Learning

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Executive summary

Customer-activated and technology-led learning are key themes in the Towards Maturity New Learning Agenda. Findings from **The Learner Voice 2 Study 2015** reveal that there is a marked difference between the needs of the learners, and the output from L&D. Choice, breadth and flexibility are key for learners. In fact, 82% of learners like to learn at their own pace and 50% are looking for learning on the go. So, how can companies bridge the gap between what learners need and what L&D is currently delivering?

The 2014 **Towards Maturity Benchmark** showed that in a sample of more than 600 organisations, from all sectors, top learning companies are using technology enabled-learning to achieve greater success. Top learning companies are over twice as likely to report:

- Improved staff motivation and engagement

- Improved speed of response to business change

- Improved ability to engage new types of learners

However, despite the interest of learners in more flexible learning, the 2014 Towards Maturity Benchmark Report highlighted that only 19% of learners engaged with online professional self-development without prompting, and that only 20% were achieving the improved employee engagement they sought.

Towards Maturity Benchmark values

- 17% improvement in staff satisfaction

- 9% reduction in staff turnover
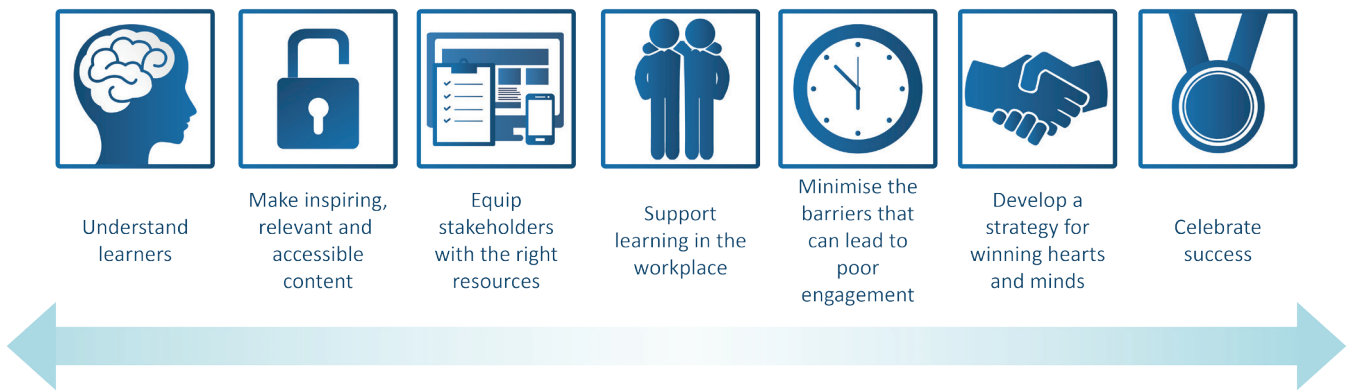
- 14% increase in productivity

This report looks at the behaviour of the top learning companies in order to identify a number of practical ideas to help L&D professionals understand how engaged their staff are. It also looks at the benefits across the business, staff and L&D efficiency that can be expected as staff engagement is improved.

	Compared with average, top learning companies are more than twice as likely to:
1. Understand learners	Allow staff to learn at home
2. Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content	Involve managers, trainers and users in the design of content
3. Equip stakeholders with the right resources	Equip line managers with resources so that their teams get the most out of technology-enabled learning
4. Support learning in the workplace	Provide access to job aids online or via mobile devices
5. Minimise the barriers that can lead to poor engagement	Complete and report on pilot projects before implementing major learning initiatives
6. Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds	Ensure that there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders
7. Celebrate success	Regularly communicate learning successes to senior management

The Engagement Index

Towards Maturity have isolated characteristics from these 7 habits to define our Engagement Index to consider how well organisations are succeeding in building staff engagement.

Highly engaged companies, scoring well on the Engagement Index, are delivering greater benefits and reporting fewer barriers to learning than those that are poorly engaged.

Understand learners	Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content	Equip stakeholders with the right resources	Support learning in the workplace	Minimise the barriers that can lead to poor engagement	Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds	Celebrate success

Learning innovation, done well, is impacting bottom line business results.

IN-F⌕CUS REPORT

Introduction

According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report , only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work. Gallup researchers studied the differences in performance between engaged and actively disengaged work units, and found that those scoring in the top half on employee engagement nearly doubled their odds of success, compared with those in the bottom half. They also found that those in the top quartile for employee engagement improved productivity by 21%, profitability by 22% and customer satisfaction by 10%. They also found significant reduction in staff turnover.

So can a modernised learning strategy help organisations engage employees more effectively?

In the Towards Maturity 2014-15 Benchmark report: Modernising Learning: Delivering Results, we reported similar levels of impact from technology-enabled learning programmes. Analysis of data from over 600 organisations in the last three years revealed an average:

- 14% improvement in organisational productivity

- 17% improvement in customer satisfaction scores

- 10% improvement in organisational revenue

- 9% reduction in staff turnover

In fact, many were achieving much greater improvements than these.

The Towards Maturity 2014 Benchmark provides compelling evidence to demonstrate that **learning innovation, done well, is delivering bottom line business results**. Technology-enabled learning is delivering improved employee engagement. This In Focus report draws on our Benchmark data, together with data from over 5,000 learners gathered in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape study during 2014, to help **senior leaders in the business, in HR and in L&D** build staff engagement through the use of technology-enabled learning.

This report illustrates practical actions that should be taken to improve business results and explores progress over the last three years.

What do we mean by good engagement?

What does the well-engaged learner look like?

- Well motivated and able to embark on learning without prompting (and complete it where appropriate), supplementing formal inputs in their own time

- Involved in the design of the learning experience

- Confident when using learning systems and technologies, can navigate choices successfully

- Confident to manage their own development

- Selects tasks at the border of their competence, that stretch them and demand more effort and concentration

- Can see how to apply their new knowledge/skills in the work context

- Approaches new learning with curiosity, interest and enthusiasm

- Happy to share and pass on their knowledge and recommendations for learning to others

- Applies skills actively

For L&D, good engagement means

- Providing the resources and choices to support alignment with business and strategic goals

- Excellent communications at all levels – with learners, trainers, line managers and senior managers

- A seamless end-to-end technology-enabled process from recruitment into programmes to completion – and on into the workplace

- Minimising the barriers of technology, attitude, capability and capacity

- Freeing people up to learn from each other

- Providing relevant and exciting content and resources to support learning – and the application of learning in the workplace

- Getting the change management processes right when a new programme is launched

Benchmarking against top learning companies

In past studies we analysed the implementation activity of "e-mature" organisations, those that are reporting the best results, and grouped behaviours into six workstreams that we describe in the Towards Maturity Model 1. We define top learning companies as those that are in the top quartile for the Towards Maturity Index (see References for further detail).

Defining Need

Learner Context

Work Context

Building Capability

Ensuring Engagement

Demonstrating Value

ALIGNING TO NEED

DELIVERING IMPACT

Benchmarking against top learning companies

The 2014 **Towards Maturity Benchmark** showed that in a sample of more than 600 organisations from all sectors, top learning companies are using technology enabled-learning to achieve greater success. Top learning companies are over four times as likely to report:

- Improved staff motivation and engagement

- Improved speed of response to business change

- Improved ability to engage new types of learners

and over 3 times more likely to report (when compared to those in the bottom quartile):

- Improvements in productivity

- Improved sharing of good practice

- Increased ability to tailor learning programmes to need

- Faster application of learning points in the workflow

- Improved talent/performance management

- Improved support for organisational change

Towards Maturity Benchmark values

- 17% improvement in staff satisfaction

- 9% reduction in staff turnover

- 14% increase in productivity

Ensuring Engagement ▶

What are top learning companies doing to achieve success?

Ensuring Engagement is a critical workstream in the Towards Maturity model. High levels of engagement, along with alignment to business goals, will deliver results. However, many companies still aren't maximising the full benefits from implementing a technology-enabled learning strategy.

Seven habits of L&D teams that can increase staff engagement

Top learning companies are more likely to...

1. **Understand learners**

2. **Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content**

3. **Equip stakeholders with the right resources**

4. **Support learning in the workflow**

5. **Minimise the barriers that can lead to poor engagement**

6. **Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds**

7. **Celebrate success**

Let's examine these in more detail....

Understand learners	Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content	Equip stakeholders with the right resources	Support learning in the workplace	Minimise the barriers that can lead to poor engagement	Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds	Celebrate success

1. Understand learners

We need to be confident about giving the learner control.

Today's employees are willing to learn differently. In order to engage staff through learning, we need to understand their needs and preferences, and what motivates them.

In the Towards Maturity Learner Voice 2 study, 63% of learners say they want to engage with online learning, four out of five are willing to share what they know with others online, and 55% are motivated by using tools that will help them network and learn from others. Yet two-thirds of L&D professionals in the 2014 Towards Maturity Benchmark believe that their employees lack the skill to manage their own learning.

> **How well do we know our learners?**
>
> In these highlighted sections, we contrast the findings of the 2014 Benchmark with the views of the learners themselves from the 2015 Learner Voice 2 study.

This is no time to base decisions on assumptions: today's learners are more aware of their requirements and also expect more choice. L&D professionals need to understand the behaviour of today's learner better, in order to design technology-enhanced learning interventions that truly engage and support their needs.

Four out of five L&D professionals are turning to technology-enabled learning to improve staff motivation and retention, yet only 20% report actual improvement. Are learners empowered to manage their own learning? Do they benefit from a supportive organisational learning culture? Do L&D really understand what motivates their learners?

L&D confidence in learner enthusiasm is low. 57% of L&D professionals cite that learners are reluctant to learn using technology, and feel it's a barrier to implementation. Only 19% would agree that their learners engage in professional self-development without prompting. Yet only 36% of L&D professionals agree that they are proactive in understanding what their learners need to do their jobs.

Our study shows that learners are keen to learn. In a sample of 5000 learners from across all sectors:

- **63%** agree they are happy to engage in online learning without prompting

- **82%** are looking for self-paced learning

- **50%** are looking for learning on the go

- **30%** agree that the online learning available to them in their organisation will help them to pursue personal interests

> **Learners told us what motivates them:**
>
> - **51%** to be able to do my job better/faster
> - **25%** to keep up with new technology
> - **43%** for personal development – I like to learn
> - **36%** to be eligible for promotion
> - **47%** to achieve a professional certification level
> - **13%** to increase productivity

Compared with the sample as a whole, top learning companies are more than twice as likely to:

- Support learners' career aspirations (or personal job goals) with technology-enabled learning (66% vs. 29%)

- Allow access to a broad range of non-job related learning (46% vs. 25%)

- Allow staff time to learn at home (37% vs. 19%)

- Allow staff to learn at places convenient to them (89% vs. 44%)

How well do we know our learners?

81% of learners say they are responsible for managing their own learning and development.

19% of L&D professionals say their learners engage with professional self-development without prompting.

Checklist:

✓ Are you aware of how your learners are using social media (outside of L&D) to share ideas?

✓ Does your technology-enabled learning give your learners control over their development?

✓ Can your learners choose to access your e-learning provision at any time?

✓ Can your learners choose to learn at places convenient to them?

Progress update

To what extent are we improving the way we understand learners?

As we understand learner needs, we can empower them more effectively yet even with these basic considerations we have seen little improvement over the last three years.

Technology-enabled learning gives our learner more control over their development
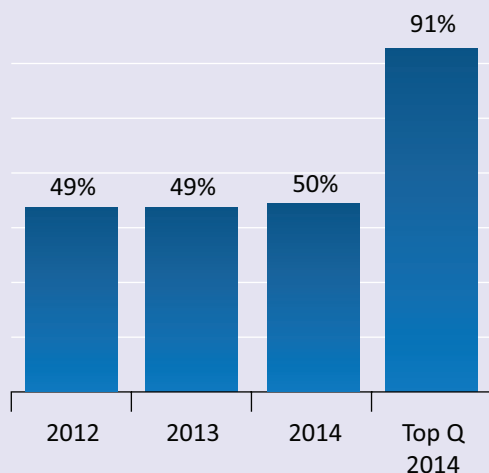
2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
49%	49%	50%	91%

Learners can choose to learn at places convenient to them

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
48%	44%	44%	89%
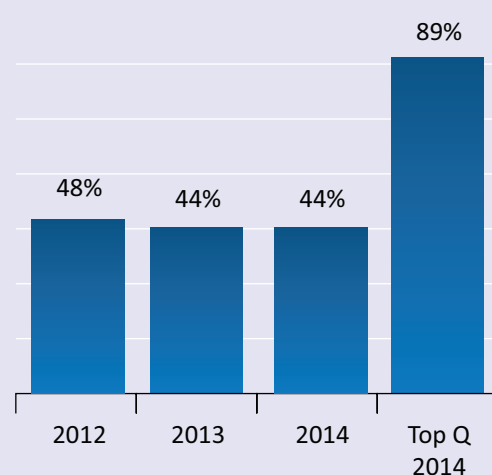
% strongly agreeing with the statement

2. Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content

First impressions count. Ensure your content - and its look and feel - meets the needs of the business.

Compared with average, L&D teams in top learning companies are nearly twice as likely to agree that they need to involve others in the design process for learning approaches:

- **73%** involve managers in learning design (40% average)

- **66%** involve classroom trainers in learning design (40% average)

- **67%** involve users in design, increasing from 51% in 2013 (29% average)

User engagement can be further enhanced through encouraging users to generate relevant content, add to wikis, develop their own blogs, record videos of best practice or discuss what they have found most useful.

How well do we know our learners?

41% of learners report that current online learning content is not relevant to their needs.

47% of L&D professionals think their programmes are relevant. Only half remove outdated content.

Top learning companies are more likely to use:

- External custom-made content (72% vs. 64%)

- User generated content (66% vs. 43%)

- In-house wikis (49% vs. 34%)

- Blogs (59% vs. 34% - up from 44% in 2013)

Many of the top learning companies are also increasing access to content through mobile devices. For example, through developing policies on Bring Your Own Device, providing tablets or smartphones and designing mobile apps (for example: 52% specifically enable content for mobile, compared with just 40% on average).

Checklist:

✔ Do all of your L&D team understand the business goals and work actively to support them?

✔ Do you use defined performance support practices to support learning transfer after formal training?

✔ Do you measure specific business metrics/outcomes when evaluating the effectiveness of your learning?
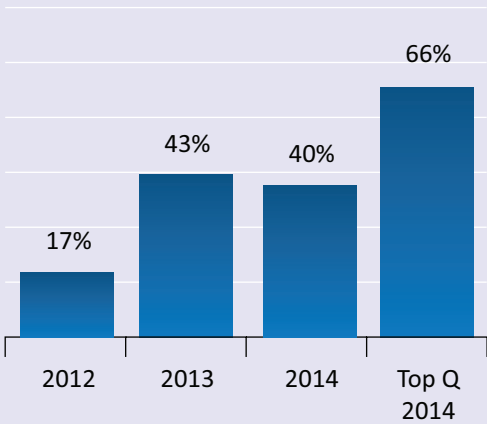
Progress update

To what extent are we improving the way that we engage stakeholders in content design?

Top performing organisations connect with key stakeholders at design stage but, on average, only 2 in 5 have been doing this in the last 3 years.
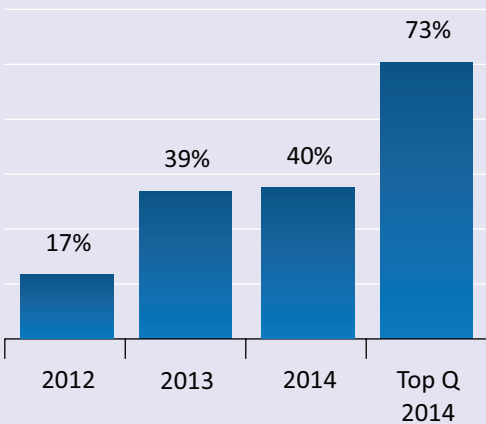
We involve users in the design of the most appropriate learning approach
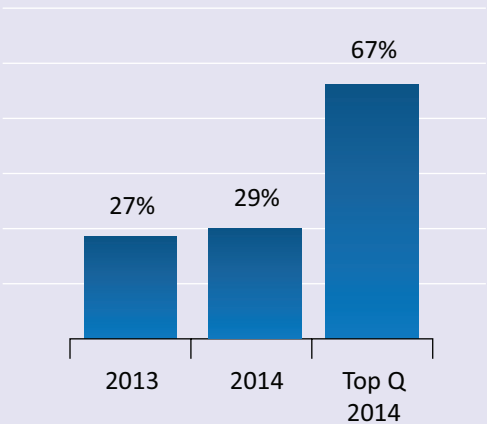
2013	2014	Top Q 2014
27%	29%	67%

We involve classroom trainers in the design process for e-learning courses

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
17%	43%	40%	66%

We involve managers in the design of the most appropriate solution

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
17%	39%	40%	73%

% strongly agreeing with the statement

3. Equip stakeholders with the right resources

Stakeholder engagement beyond the learning event to demonstrate ROI helps enhance buy-in and growing recognition of the contribution of L&D to create an effective and efficient business where staff want to work

It is not just the learners themselves that need the right learning resources. Classroom trainers, senior colleagues and line managers, coaches, mentors or workplace buddies are just as important. In fact, L&D have less influence on learners' propensity to engage with technology than they might think.

Top learning companies are more than twice as likely to equip line managers with resources so that their teams get the most out of technology-enabled learning (48% vs. 18% average). 55% of them actually train their classroom trainers to extend learning beyond the classroom through technology (24% average).

Whose opinion will most likely encourage you to get involved in learning online?

- **28%** my manager
- **28%** a work colleague
- **24%** no encouragement needed – I am already learning online
- **4%** member of L&D

Work colleagues and fellow team members are more likely to be overlooked as stakeholders, but their influence on learning success and potential to provide support goes way beyond any formal arrangements for coaching and mentoring in the workplace.

Checklist:

- ☑ We equip line managers with resources so their teams get the most out of technology-enabled learning
- ☑ We involve classroom trainers in engaging learners with technology-enabled programmes
- ☑ Our face-to-face training actively builds on knowledge gained through e-learning courses

How well do we know our learners?

Learners find the following essential or very useful in their job:

- 91% working in collaboration with other team members
- 81% support from my manager
- 67% support from my coach, mentor or buddy

Equipping stakeholders

Acteon has helped care home operator HC-One use learning and development to drive business transformation through its multi-award-winning learning programme *touch*. A key success factor for this project has been the extent to which learning is facilitated by stakeholders at all levels. For example:

- classroom trainers were retrained to support online and workplace learning

- every site has a specially trained learning ambassador

- buddy groups support colleagues who are new to online learning

- learning activities guide practice of skills in the workplace

- managers are equipped with a range of coaching tools for localised, targeted learning interventions.

Progress update

To what extent are we improving the way that we equip stakeholders?

Stakeholder engagement is critical to help engage learners but only 3 in 10 have been active in this area over the last 3 years.

Face-to-face training actively builds on knowledge gained through e-learning courses
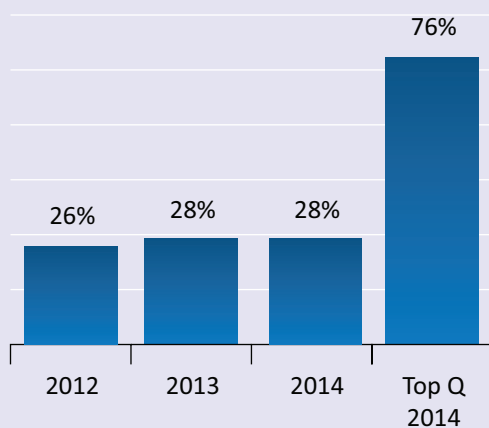
	2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
	26%	28%	28%	76%

We equip line managers with resources so their teams get the most out of technology-enabled learning

	2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
	21%	17%	18%	66%
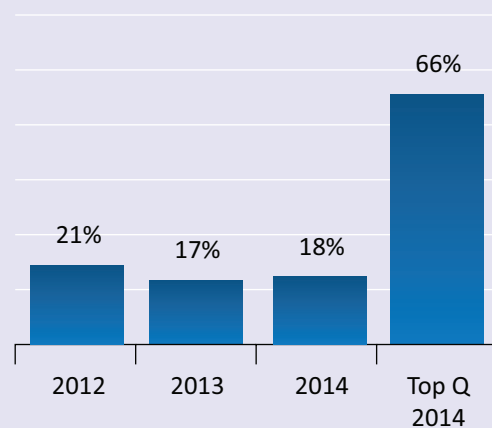
% strongly agreeing with the statement

4. Support learning in the workplace

We need to develop skills and understanding around how we can support/encourage/foster informal learning networks in the workplace.

In the New Learning Agenda we underline the importance of supporting a culture of learning within the workflow. Organisations that ensure learning is clearly aligned to the job, support collaboration through internal and external networks and support on-the-job learning are speeding up the sharing of good practice and the application of learning in the workplace.

Clear alignment of learning to the job

Whilst 90% of top learning companies would agree that their learning initiatives support the skills the business needs, only 80% would say that these are delivered in time to meet the needs of the business. Across the whole sample, organisational learning is less well focused on business need (60%) and interventions are less timely (47%). This shifts the emphasis from planned formal learning, which can take too long to organise and deliver to more responsive, learner-centric methods.

We are moving to a more integrated, blended approach which incorporates online discussion, wikis and the use of social media. We will be moving our focus more towards informal and learner-led approaches.

Supporting collaboration

Learners are not staying silent. They are communicating with each other, using technologies that connect them into internal and external networks, sharing their knowledge and collaborating on developing ideas and resources. Indeed, 55% of learners are motivated by using technologies that allow them to network and learn with others.

Organisation-wide, 95% are looking to increase sharing of good practice through the use of technology-enabled learning, but only 23% are actually achieving the benefit

> **How well do we know our learners?**
>
> 62% of learners are using social networking apps on their mobile devices. 50% of learners find external networks and communities essential or very useful in their job - a significant increase on 2013.
>
> 18% of L&D professionals are aware of how their learners are using social media (outside of L&D) to share ideas.

they seek. L&D have long recognised the benefit that networking can bring for them professionally, so they appreciate the benefits of encouraging learning communities and action learning sets.

Networking with others in the same arena has worked well for us - it helps to share good practice, compare approaches and strategies etc.

Many organisations, however, have not utilised the power of external social networks and remain unaware of the full extent to which their learners are using social media outside the workplace to enhance their learning and forward their careers.

Supporting on-the-job behaviour

We are moving towards a 70-20-10 framework; considering L&D as a method of performance support rather than an output or end in itself

Defined performance support practices help to support learning transfer after formal training. Top learning companies establish a robust technology infrastructure to make the job simpler, rather than adding complexity or stress to an already over-stretched workforce. They also ensure that both their L&D teams and their staff have the skills to use learning technologies effectively. In top learning companies:

- 81% understand the support systems available to staff (e.g. help desk, peer support, manager support) (47% average)

- 78% provide staff with access to job aids online or via mobile devices (66%)

- 33% provide staff with access to a tutor or subject expert when learning online (15%)

- 31% have content curation strategies in place to help staff make sense of the resources available to them (12%)

- 72% ensure that they have individual development plans in place for all their staff (57%)

We place a much greater focus on enabling sharing and learning from other learners, rather than having to wait for a course to provide what we think they need to learn. We provide more introductory courses online to create the capacity for blended or more advanced courses face to face or on-the-job/other types of support.

Strengthening the individual learner's involvement in co-creating their learning experience depends on negotiation and dialogue between the tutor and the learner. The expectation in top learning companies is that all learners should have a thorough assessment of their needs at the start of their course, that they should be supported in developing a range of effective learning styles in order to get the most from their course, and that they should take responsibility for managing their own learning.

Staff can self-author courses for the business and do testing online so they can learn at a time that suits them best and have access to information at their fingertips whilst on-the-job.

Checklist:

☑ Do you have content curation strategies in place to support staff?

☑ Do you understand and use the existing support systems available to your staff?

☑ Do you encourage learners to share experiences and solve problems using online social media tools?

How well do we know our learners?

80% of learners are willing to use technology to share what they know with others.

20% of L&D professionals think their learners have the ability to connect and work productively together.

Progress update

To what extent are we improving the way that learning is supported in the workplace?

Social learning is not new but progress has been static in key areas such as developing content creation strategies, understanding support systems and equipping learners to help themselves.
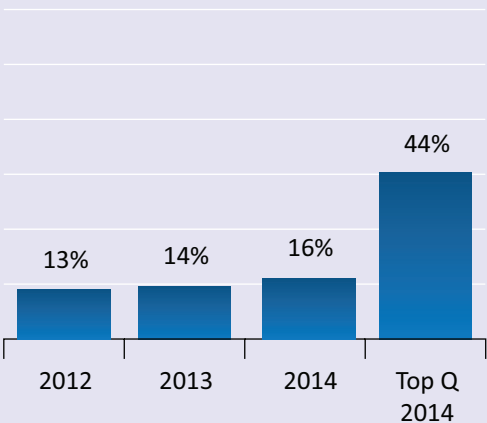
**We have content curation strategies
in place to help staff make sense
of the resources available to them**

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
13%	11%	12%	31%
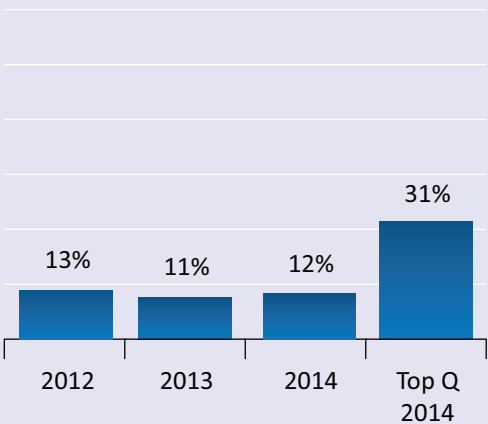
**We understand the support systems
available to our staff**
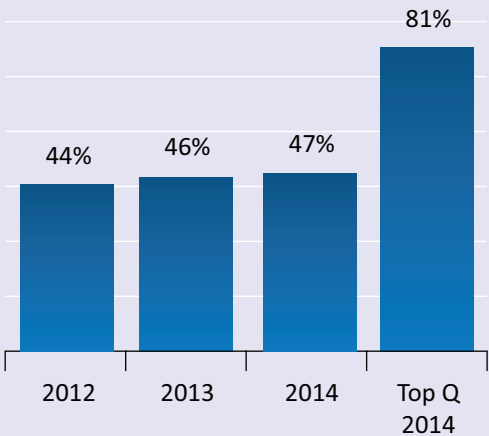
2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
44%	46%	47%	81%

**We encourage learners to share
experiences and solve problems
using online social media tools**

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
13%	14%	16%	44%

% strongly agreeing with the statement

5. Minimise the barriers

Find key champions - particularly in resistant areas of the business

Barriers to learning can lead to poor engagement. Getting the technology right, the support, the communications and the rewards in place, and establishing a learning culture where the technology is an enabler rather than a distracter, all help to minimise the risk that resource-intensive learning programmes do not meet their goals.

Many of the barriers to staff engagement reported by L&D can point directly to ideas for action planning...

No shared agenda across the organisation, no measures of success defined, unclear roles and responsibilities across the organisation and senior stakeholders do not value learning as a strategic contributor.

Our learning population is not prepared to deal with new technology. The penetration of technology is not homogeneous in regions and countries.

Enforced content provided by central department which is not location specific and requires more work to amend than to author locally

Compliance issues in a regulated environment can make innovation in learning very tricky, but there are a few approaches which are being used successfully in top learning companies. For example:

Top 6 barriers for learners

- **63%** lack of time for self-study
- **41% c**urrent online content is not relevant to my needs
- **63%** I can't find what I need
- **28%** lack of somewhere appropriate to study
- **26%** uninspiring learning content
- **25%** unreliable IT infrastructure/bandwidth or firewall problems

- 69% complete and report on pilot projects before implementing major learning initiatives (46% average)

- 53% pilot new technology approaches under the official company radar (32%)

- 81% provide their learning with a specific identity and brand (51%)

- 61% 'flip' the classroom model, with face-to-face training actively building on knowledge gained through e-learning courses (28%)

Lack of time is so often cited as the major barrier to progress. Evidence from our learner study implies that learners like to learn at their own pace, and are willing to learn in their own time: evenings, weekends, break times and on the way to work. L&D can support them by providing clear information on the learning opportunities available, and by ensuring that the infrastructure and content provision is flexible so that learners aren't restricted by time or location.

Checklist:

✔ Do you identify and train local champions to act as agents for change?

✔ Do you complete and report on pilot projects before implementing major learning initiatives?

✔ Do you pilot new technology approaches under the official company radar?
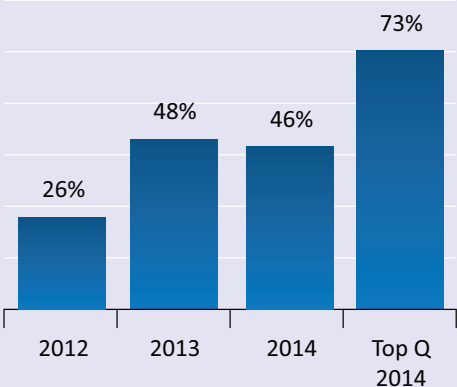
Progress update

To what extent are we minimising risks that prevent learner engagement?

More technologies are being used in learning than ever before but limited attention has been given over the last three years on proven strategies that help overcome risks.
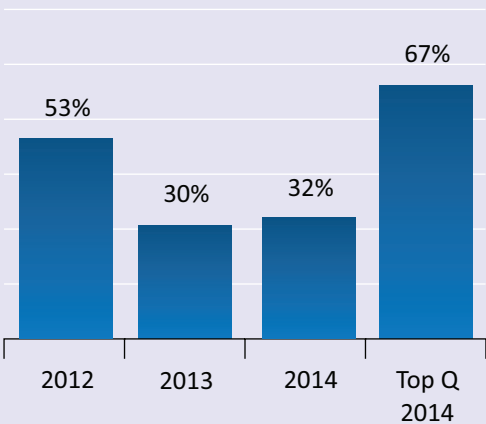
**We identify and train local champions
to act as agents for change**
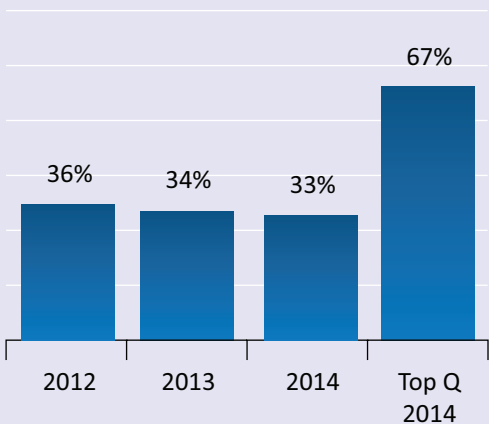
2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
36%	34%	33%	67%

**We complete and report on pilot projects
before implementing major learning initiatives**

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
26%	48%	46%	73%

**We pilot new technology approaches
under the official company radar**

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
53%	30%	32%	67%

% strongly agreeing with the statement

6. Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds

The key to an effective L&D team is ongoing planning and research to ensure that the needs of the organisation are being met. This can be aided by organisation-wide performance analysis and well communicated and structured training plans.

All levels of the organisation need to believe in, and support, a technology-enabled learning strategy in order for it to be successful. Senior managers are vital in promoting a learning culture, but their reluctance to engage with technology can restrict innovation. Top learning companies are working closely with managers to build commitment, trust, unlock talent and potential. They are also helping learners to build their skill set.

73% of top learning companies ensure that there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders (compared to just 38% on average). In top learning companies:

- 88% align L&D team activity with the strategic goals of the organisation (compared with 56% average)

- 78% agree that managers recognise the value of on- the-job learning (52%)

- 66% identify and train local champions to act as agents for change (33%)

- 66% involve top managers in promoting learning (40%)

How well do we know our learners?

Only 49% of learners believe that their managers clearly communicate the learning opportunities available to them.

44% of L&D professionals agree that individuals can access clear information about learning opportunities

Those that haven't got the full buy-in of managers recognise their importance, and the potential they have to influence learning culture:

We haven't engaged with managers/senior managers to any great extent. I believe that they would be completely supportive if the approach was well organised and communicated.

Checklist:

✓ Can individuals access clear information on the learning opportunities available to them?

✓ Are your top managers involved in promoting learning?

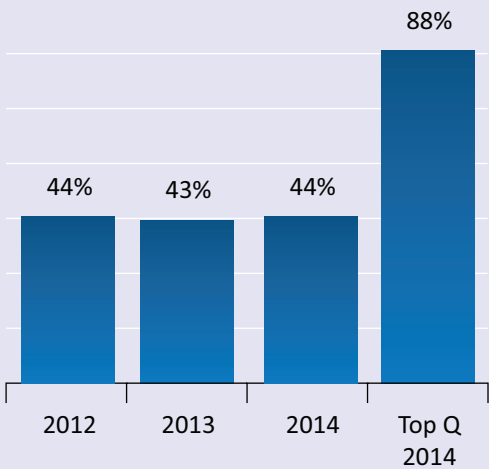✓ Do you provide each learning initiative with a specific identity and brand?

✓ Do you ensure there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders?

Progress update

To what extent are we using tactics that win over hearts and minds?

One of the top barriers for learners is not being able to find what they need, yet only two in five have been proactive in communicating with key stakeholders over the past 3 years.
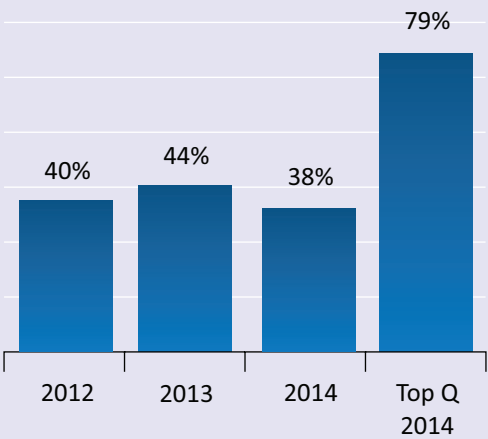
Individuals can access clear information on learning opportunities available to them

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
44%	43%	44%	88%

We provide our learning initiatives with a specific identity and brand

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
35%	56%	51%	82%

We ensure there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders

2012	2013	2014	Top Q 2014
40%	44%	38%	79%
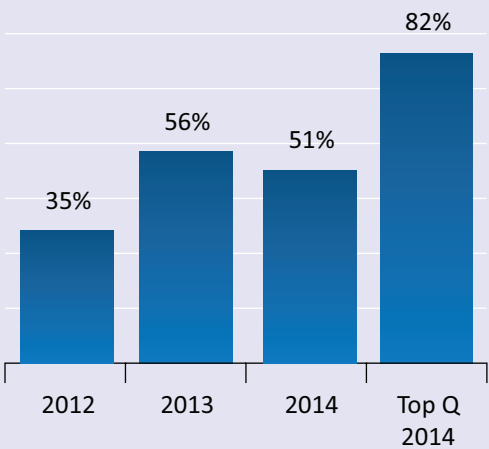
% strongly agreeing with the statement

7. Celebrate success

70% of top learning companies regularly communicate learning successes to senior management – more than twice the average (31%). They also remember to keep the line managers and supervisors in the loop, and publicise the achievements and successes of individual learners.

For the learners, rewards and recognition are very important, but too often learners experience the stick rather than the carrot:

Lack of time from users, lack of motivation, no promotion, no overtime, no fringe benefits, no acknowledgement from senior management, just cuts in salaries, and threats of redundancy, forced retirement and freezing of salaries

Formal recognition through qualifications can give cause for celebration and a clear measure of achievement.

How well do we know our learners?

51% of learners report that recognition that they have completed online learning programmes is important to them.

25% of L&D agree that they recognise and reward achievement.

33% report that they have achieved a better qualified workforce as a result of technology-enabled learning, with an average 15% measurable increase in the number of qualifications gained. 17% are now starting to use online achievement badges or points systems, increasing to 27% in top learning companies, but these look set to double in use over the next two years.

Checklist:
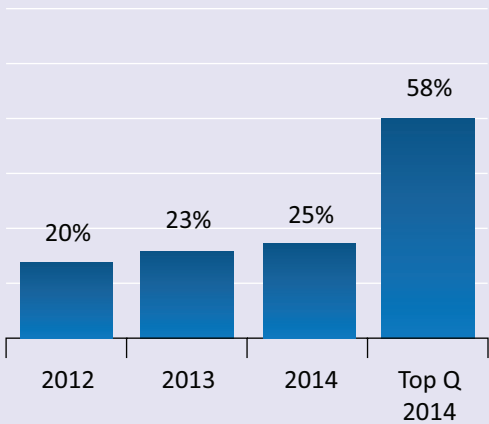
✔ Do you reward or give some recognition for individual achievements?

✔ Do you regularly communicate e-learning successes to senior management?

✔ Do you regularly communicate e-learning successes to line managers and supervisors?

✔ Do you publicise the successes of individuals as a result of learning technologies?
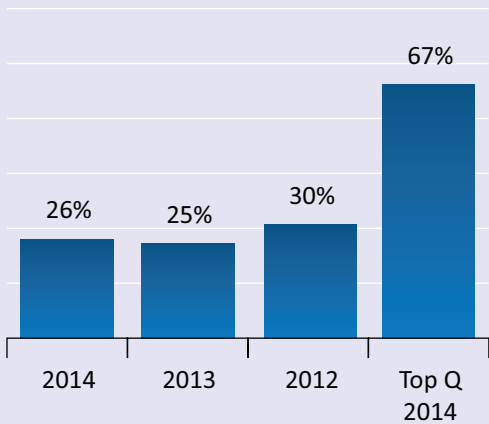
Progress update

To what extent are we making progress in celebrating success?

Learners say that recognition is important to them but only a quarter of L&D leaders reward or recognise achievements and this has not changed in three years.
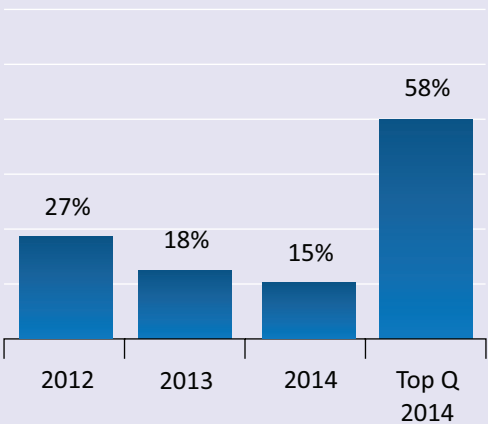
Individuals are rewarded or given some recognition for their achievement

Year	%
2012	20%
2013	23%
2014	25%
Top Q 2014	58%

We regularly communicate e-learning successes to line managers and supervisors

Year	%
2014	26%
2013	25%
2012	30%
Top Q 2014	67%

We publicise the successes of individuals as a result of learning technologies

Year	%
2012	27%
2013	18%
2014	15%
Top Q 2014	58%

% strongly agreeing with the statement

The Towards Maturity Engagement Index

The 7 lessons above work, but what is the impact of engagement?

In 2012, Towards Maturity started to look at organisations that demonstrated strong engagement and compared them with those that didn't in order to see what difference it made, not just to learner results, but to programme impact.
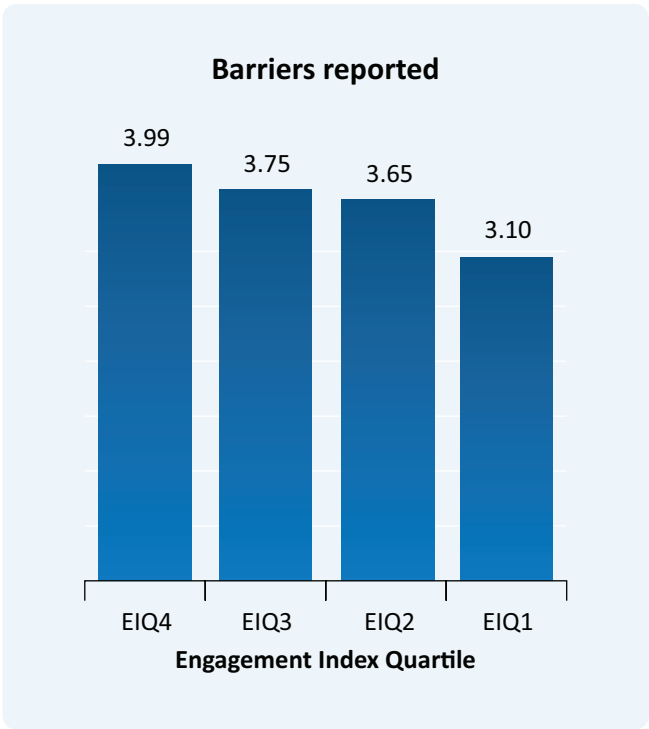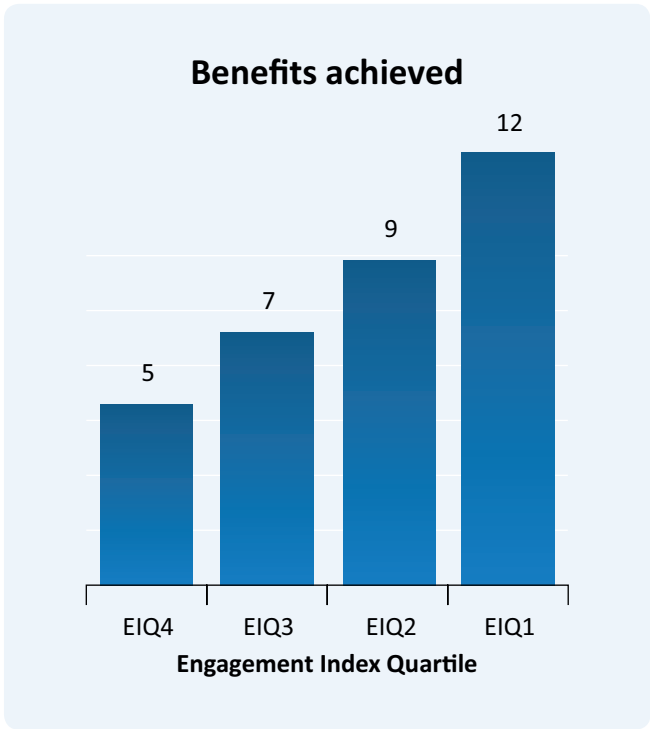
Prior to that we reported on programme impact in the top learning companies based on responses to 100 statements distilled from expert opinion on what constitutes effective practice. We isolated 20 of these characteristics that describe effective practice in terms of engagement to derive a Towards Maturity Engagement Index.

Defining Need

Learner Context

Work Context

Building Capability

Ensuring Engagement

Demonstrating Value

ALIGNING TO NEED

DELIVERING IMPACT

We compared organisations in the bottom quartile to the 'highly engaged' organisations (those who are in the top quartile for the Engagement Index). We discovered they are:

- More than 5 times as likely to
  — Reduce time to competence
  — Respond faster to changing business conditions
  — Engage new types of learners
  — Increase on-the-job productivity

- More than 4 times as likely to
  — Improve staff satisfaction to aid motivation and retention
  — Speed up and improve application of learning in the workplace
  — Improve induction process

- More than 3 times as likely to
  — Improve the quality of learning delivered
  — Increase ongoing sharing of good practice
  — Improve talent/performance management
  — Support organisational change
  — Increase adaptability of programme to individual need

Across the board, **highly engaged** companies not only report **more benefits**, but they also report significantly **fewer barriers** relating to learning content than others.

Benefits achieved

5	7	9	12
EIQ4	EIQ3	EIQ2	EIQ1

Engagement Index Quartile

Barriers reported

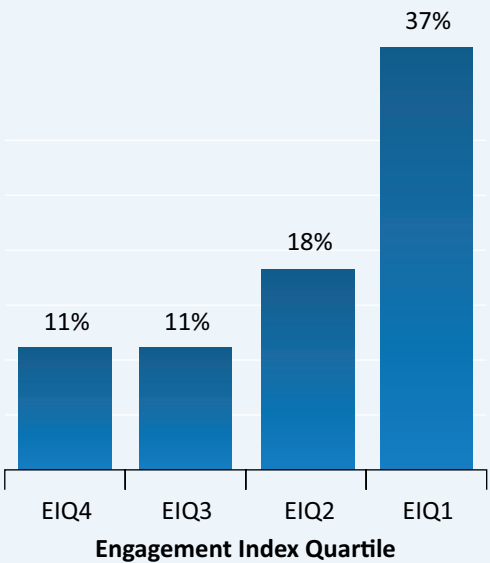|			
3.99	3.75	3.65	3.10
EIQ4	EIQ3	EIQ2	EIQ1

Engagement Index Quartile

By exploring the features of highly engaged companies, we found that they are more likely to:

- Provide faster response to changing business conditions
- Improve the application of learning in the workplace
- Reduce time to competence

Respond faster to business change

EIQ4	EIQ3	EIQ2	EIQ1
8%	10%	29%	38%

Engagement Index Quartile

Improve application of learning

EIQ4	EIQ3	EIQ2	EIQ1
11%	11%	18%	37%
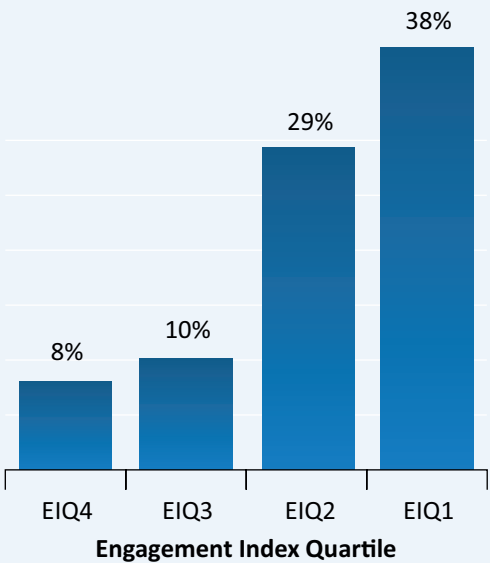
Engagement Index Quartile

Reduced time to competence

EIQ4	EIQ3	EIQ2	EIQ1
8%	25%	25%	42%

Engagement Index Quartile
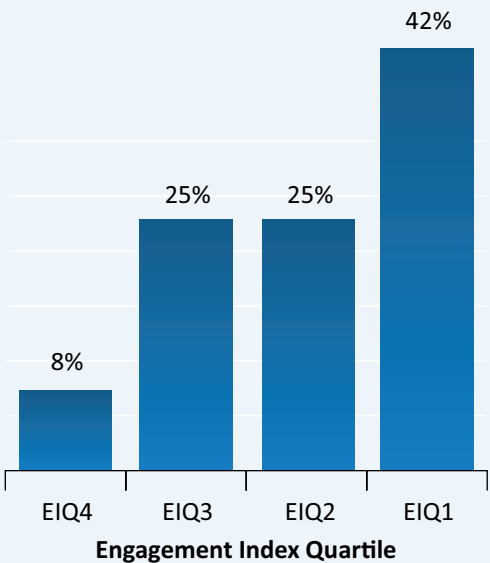
Engagement and alignment – two sides of the same coin

Whilst the Engagement Index draws out characteristics of the highly engaged organisation, close alignment of learning to business and strategic objectives is increasingly recognised by learning and development professionals as underpinning success. The challenge for L&D in 2015 is balancing business priorities and individual needs.

Engagement is bound to alignment. The learner who does not feel connected to the organisation's strategy will not be able to sustain job satisfaction and commitment. Fewer than half (46%) would agree that their staff understand how their work is linked to the organisation's performance. In the highly engaged organisation – this rises to 71%.

In a survey by BlessingWhite, the more senior a respondent, the more engaged they were likely to feel – the implication being that involvement in formulating strategy creates greater engagement.

In our recent report on Aligning learning to business, we noted 7 habits of highly aligned L&D teams:

1. Actively involve business leaders in learning decisions

2. Use strategic business objectives to determine learning priorities

3. Focus on the end results

4. Integrate with HR and talent strategy

5. Demonstrate business value

6. Ensure staff understand their contribution

7. Enjoy proactive management commitment

We also found that engagement led to achievement of a higher number of benefits overall, and lower numbers of barriers reported, than those in the top quartile for the Alignment Index.

Conclusion

The engaged employee is driven and passionate about their work; keen to improve performance and achieve personal goals. For the third year running, we found that their success is harmoniously interwoven with the goals of the organisation, and the continuous learning process is a key part of that. Innovative learning programmes that lead to better performance and productivity, can lead to better engaged staff. However, whilst we understand what is needed, few are making progress year on year. The characteristics of the well-engaged employee can provide useful pointers for L&D professionals to consider how the learning context can deliver:

- A highly focused/aligned workforce with high job satisfaction – leading to maximum contribution
- Staff that are excited about their work and emotionally connected or committed to their work or their employer
- Staff that are loyal, enthusiastic, passionate and content

Staff engagement will be enhanced by:

✔ Involving learners in the design process – making sure that the learning intervention is addressing a real need or problem and is rooted in practical examples

✔ Using gaming techniques and building incentives or rewards for completing learning or for reaching certain stages– such as end of stage scores, competitions and leaderboards

✔ Considering how learning is integrated into the performance review process

✔ Enabling learners to satisfy their personal values and ambitions. Alignment to personal or career goals will increase their motivation.

✔ And to state the obvious - although sadly lacking - building interesting, challenging, meaningful and accessible learning resources.

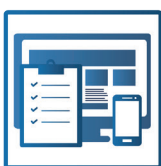Creating a learner-centric experience will be facilitated by:

✔ Involving learners in the assessment of their needs

✔ Providing pastoral and, if appropriate, learning support for learners

✔ Providing staff with continual professional development

✔ Involving learners in continuous quality improvement

Understand learners	Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content	Equip stakeholders with the right resources	Support learning in the workplace	Minimise the barriers that can lead to poor engagement	Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds	Celebrate success

Take the engagement test!

Those organisations that adopt the Towards Maturity benchmark in 2015 will be provided with their own score for the new Engagement Index. Use the checklist below to help in your action planning and to reflect on your current engagement. You can find out your Engagement and Alignment Indices by taking part in the Towards Maturity Benchmark at www.towardsmaturity.org/benchmark

	Regularly	Sometimes	We need to start!
Understand learners			
Technology enabled learning gives our learners more control over their development			
Staff engage with professional self development without prompting			
We are aware of how our learners are using social media (outside of L&D) to share ideas			
Learners can choose to access our e-learning provision at any time			
Learners can choose to learn at places convenient to them			
Make inspiring, relevant and accessible content			
We involve users in the design of the most appropriate learning approach			
We involve managers in the design of the most appropriate solution			
We involve classroom trainers in the design process for e-learning courses			
Support learning in the workplace			
We have content curation strategies in place to support staff			
We measure specific business metrics when evaluating the effectiveness of learning technologies			
We encourage learners to share experiences and solve problems using online social media tools			
Equip stakeholders with the right resources			
We equip line managers with resources so their teams get the most out of technology enabled learning			
We involve users in the design of the most appropriate learning approach			
We involve classroom trainers in engaging learners with technology enabled programmes			
Our face-to-face training actively builds on knowledge gained through e-learning courses			

	Regularly	Sometimes	We need to start!
Minimise the barriers			
We identify and train local champions to act as agents for change			
We complete and report on pilot projects before implementing major learning initiatives			
We pilot new technology approaches under the official company radar			
Develop a strategy for winning hearts and minds			
Individuals can access clear information on learning opportunities available to them			
Our top managers are involved in promoting learning			
We provide our learning initiatives with a specific identity and brand			
We ensure there is a communication plan in place for all key stakeholders			
Celebrate success			
Individuals are rewarded or given some recognition for their achievement			
We regularly communicate e-learning successes to senior management			
We regularly communicate e-learning successes to line managers and supervisors			
We publicise the successes of individuals as a result of learning technologies			

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Recommended resources and references

Towards Maturity White Papers

- Modernising Learning: Delivering Results www.towardsmaturity.org/2014benchmark

- New Learning Agenda: Talent: Technology: Change www.towardsmaturity.org/2013benchmark

- The Learner Voice 1, April 2014 www.towardsmaturity.org/learnervoice1

- The Learner Voice 2, May 2015 www.towardsmaturity.org/learnervoice2

- Aligning Learning to Business: www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus-alignment2015 (the companion paper to this report)

- Slide deck: The L&D challenge for 2014: Balancing business priorities and individual needs
  http://www.towardsmaturity.org/article/2014/04/03/ld-challenge-2014-balancing-business-priorities-an/

Additional reading

- HC-One Case Study http://www.acteoncommunication.com/case-studies/hc-one.html
- Priory Group Case Study http://www.acteoncommunication.com/case-studies/priory-data.html
- Daiichi Sanyo Case Study http://www.acteoncommunication.com/case-studies/daiichi.html
- Cambian Case Study
  http://www.towardsmaturity.org/article/2012/02/02/cambian-achieves-excellence-e-learning/

About Acteon

Acteon
communication and learning

We design and develop award-winning communication and learning solutions to empower growth, change and development.

Our solutions reflect the specific requirements of our clients – from bespoke blended programmes on induction, product knowledge and compliance training, to support with improving engagement and driving change. Whether the need is single 'course' or a global corporate programme, we create learning and development interventions that align with individual and organisational goals.

"Acteon's work has quite simply been critical to our success." **Dr Chai Patel, Chairman, HC-One**

Record four-time winners of the E-learning Award "Best e-learning project securing widespread adoption."

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About Towards Maturity

TOWARDS MATURITY

ABOUT TOWARDS MATURITY

Towards Maturity is an independent benchmarking practice that provides authoritative research and expert consultancy services to help assess and improve the effectiveness and consistency of L&D performance within organisations. The Towards Maturity portfolio includes:

The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study™
http://towardsmaturity.org/static/survey/
The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study is an internationally recognized longitudinal study on the effective implementation of learning innovation based on the input of 3,500 organisations and 15,000 learners over eleven years. Towards Maturity continuously surveys and studies how people learn at work. This data is used to help L&D leaders assess and improve the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of their learning provision. Previous research papers and sector specific reports are available through the Towards Maturity Shop.

Towards Maturity Benchmark Centre™
http://mybenchmark.towardsmaturity.org/
A dedicated centre to complete your Benchmark and apply everything we know about good practice to gain personal, practical time saving advice in one place. Follow the online three-step continuous improvement process and Benchmark your current approach with your peers.

Towards Maturity Strategic Review™
http://www.towardsmaturity.org/strategicreview
The Towards Maturity Strategic Review is a deeper analysis and comparison of your Benchmark against those who are already utilising learning innovation to deliver bottom line results and success. It helps you analyse and interpret your personal benchmark report to establish a base line and identify the next action steps for performance improvement leading to good practice within your organisation.

Towards Maturity Learning Landscape™
www.towardsmaturity.org/learner
The Towards Maturity Learning Landscape provides critical insights to help you understand the behaviours of your staff so you can design learning solutions that can be embedded more effectively into the workflow. It supports new learning technology strategies whilst mitigating risk when introducing new programmes or models of learning.

Towards Maturity Sector Benchmark Groups
www.towardsmaturity.org/benchmarkgroups
Join senior L&D leaders in your sector three times a year to use the Towards Maturity Benchmark to support performance improvement, prioritise action planning and accelerate progress. Attendance supports faster business results, strategic and tactical insights and an invaluable opportunity to network.

Visit www.towardsmaturity.org for more information.
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