

WHITEPAPER

Building a Learning Culture

From Occasional Learning to Continuous Development



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1 A Powerful Learning Culture Is Essential

Technological advancements are rapidly succeeding one another, the labor market is constantly changing, and the demand for new skills continues to rise. As a result, organizations must do more than just attract talent – they need to build a workforce that is both engaged and sustainably employable. What once was a nice-to-have is now a must: A powerful Learning & Development (L&D) strategy is key to becoming future-proof.

In this whitepaper, we explore why a powerful learning culture is essential for organizations aiming to grow, stay agile, and attract top talent. You'll learn how to turn a learning culture into a strategic advantage for your organization. Key themes are:

- Why a learning culture is no longer optional – and why it matters more than ever
- How to measure the Return of Investment (ROI) of Learning & Development
- How skills-based development future-proofs your L&D strategy
- Practical tools to build a learning culture that inspires and drives innovation



2 The Strategic Value of a Learning Culture



With technology evolving rapidly, job roles shifting, and skill demands rising fast, it's clear that a resilient learning culture is no longer a luxury. It's a critical strategic asset. Organizations that invest in Learning & Development (L&D) don't just out-innovate and outperform the competition – they become talent magnets! This proactive approach keeps employees engaged and adaptable, embedding continuous learning into the flow of everyday work.

Agile organizations align learning with business goals

Agility is more important than ever. In leading organizations, learning is tightly integrated with strategic priorities. Think of learning programs that drive digital transformation, enhance customer centricity, or accelerate innovation. Learning is no longer a standalone initiative, it's embedded in change processes and actively supported by leadership at every level. Responsibility for learning is shared across the entire business, with managers recognizing its role in growth and performance¹. A learning culture that aligns with business strategy makes all the difference. It ensures employees develop the right skills, at the right time, and in the right context.

"Skill-based organizations" thrive

Traditional career paths and job frameworks are losing ground. The labor market demands flexibility, and organizations are responding with a skills-oriented approach, both in recruiting talent and retaining staff. The focus is increasingly shifting from static job descriptions to dynamic skill

sets. This raises important questions: What can people do today? What can they still learn? And how do their skills align with future needs?

Skill-based organizations prioritize the employability and development potential of their people, rather than placing the job function at the center. This means focusing on what people can do and can become².

A skills-based approach promotes internal mobility, supports targeted development, and boosts team agility. At the same time, it gives employees greater control over their careers, helping them grow with purpose. A strong learning culture reinforces this approach by creating visibility into which skills are needed and which are already present. It also supports personal growth and embeds learning as a natural, continuous part of everyday work.

¹ McKinsey & Company. (z.d.). Building a learning culture that drives business forward. Via <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/building-a-learning-culture-that-drives-business-forward>

² eLearning Industry. (z.d.). Empowering The Modern Workforce: The Rise Of Skill-Based Organizations. Via <https://elearningindustry.com/empowering-the-modern-workforce-the-rise-of-skill-based-organizations>

The rise of learning software

Modern organizations need learning environments that are flexible, scalable, and aligned with strategic goals. Beyond traditional content providers, we're seeing the rise of intelligent learning platforms such as [Learning Management Systems \(LMS\)](#) and [Learning Experience Platforms \(LXP\)](#). These software tools help embed learning into everyday work. Dashboards and learning analytics give HR and L&D teams deeper insight into participation, progress, and the real impact of learning initiatives.

A learning culture as a driver of employer branding

When continuous learning becomes part of the everyday working life, its impact reaches far beyond performance alone. It significantly strengthens your position as an attractive employer. In today's competitive talent market, professionals – especially younger generations – want to work at companies who value growth and development as much as they do.

By embedding Learning & Development into every stage of the employee journey you send a clear signal: we invest in our people. That starts at the onboarding and never stops. A thriving learning culture fosters collaboration and encourages knowledge sharing across teams and departments. The result? A more engaged, motivated, and loyal workforce that is ready to make a positive difference!



3 The ROI of Learning and Development: Investing With Impact

We now know why agile organizations need to invest in Learning & Development. But how do you shift the perception of L&D from a cost center to a strategic investment? It all starts with demonstrating real impact. Fortunately, there are well-established frameworks that help track the effectiveness of learning programs. Let's dive in!

The Kirkpatrick Model

The Kirkpatrick Model³ evaluates learning across four levels:

- Level 1: Reaction – How did participants experience the training?
- Level 2: Learning – What knowledge or skills did they gain?
- Level 3: Behavior – Are employees applying what they learned in their daily work?
- Level 4: Results – What's the impact on the organization? Examples are improved productivity, better customer satisfaction, or fewer errors.

From individual experience to organizational outcomes, by assessing each of these levels, you get a comprehensive view of learning effectiveness.

The Five-Level ROI Evaluation Framework (Jack Phillips)

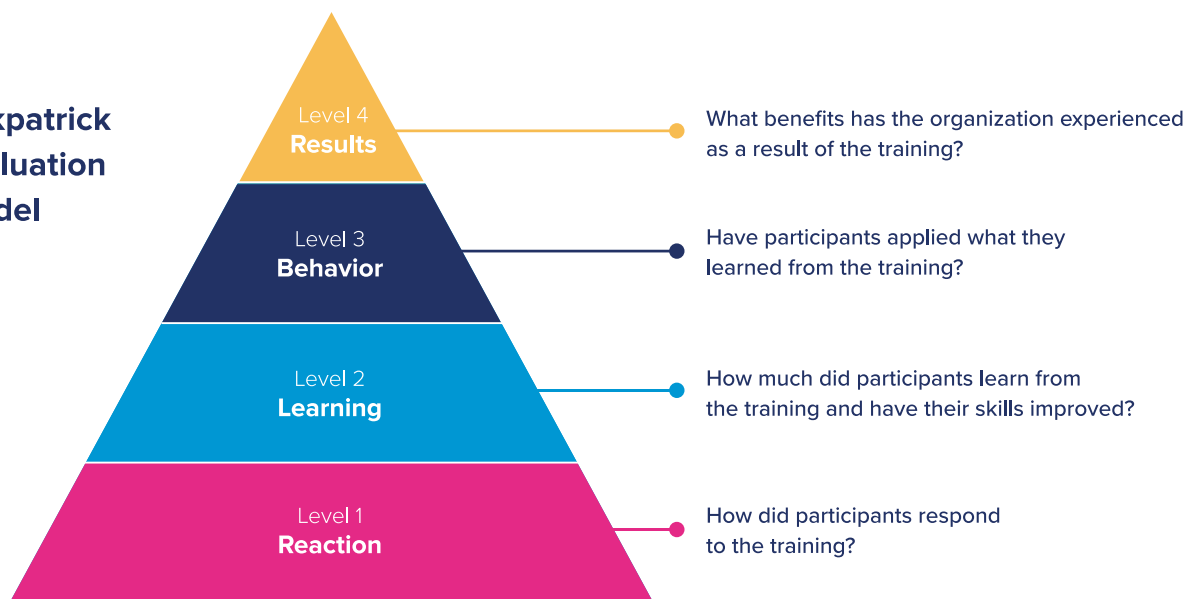
Jack Phillips' model⁴ expands on Kirkpatrick by adding a crucial fifth step: calculating the **Return on Investment (ROI)**. This step compares the costs of a learning program with business benefits such as increased performance, time savings, or stronger customer loyalty. The strength of this framework lies not only in financial measurement but also in its strategic approach. It encourages organizations to define clear objectives in advance, ensuring that learning outcomes are both measurable and aligned with business goals.

³ Kirkpatrick, Donal L. (2024), Maekacademie, 5 niveaus waarmee je aantoonbaar maakt wat jouw trainingen opleveren! Via <https://maekacademie.nl/5-niveaus-waarmee-je-aantoonbaar-maakt-wat-jouw-trainingen-opleveren/>

⁴ Philips, Jack. (2024), Maekacademie, 5 niveaus waarmee je aantoonbaar maakt wat jouw trainingen opleveren! Via <https://maekacademie.nl/5-niveaus-waarmee-je-aantoonbaar-maakt-wat-jouw-trainingen-opleveren/>



Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model



What are useful KPIs?

A strong L&D strategy starts with defining the right KPIs. Beyond tracking completed courses or earned certificates, it's essential to measure visible changes in employee capability – and how those improvements contribute to your organization's future. By continuously measuring these indicators, you lay the foundation for a data-driven L&D approach⁵.

Here are some interesting KPIs to use:

- **Performance improvement:** Is there measurable progress in productivity, quality, or customer satisfaction? This metric helps assess whether learning truly leads to better on-the-job performance.
- **Retention rates:** Are employees more likely to stay because of development opportunities? Career growth is one of the top reasons people remain with a company. By linking turnover data to learning initiatives, the long-term value of L&D becomes more visible.
- **Engagement scores:** Are employees more engaged when they have access to learning opportunities? Learning fosters motivation and commitment. A measurable increase in engagement after training is a strong indicator of impact.
- **Internal mobility:** How many employees move into new roles after completing learning programs? Internal transitions reflect successful skills development and show that L&D supports both agility and career progression.

⁵ Lepaya. (z.d.). Are trainings helping you to be better at your job? Via <https://www.lepaya.com/nl/blog/are-trainings-helping-you-to-be-better-at-your-job>





Why use software and learning analytics

Technology plays a key role in building a learning culture. Modern learning platforms offer powerful dashboards and advanced analytics that not only track progress and performance, but also directly support your broader HR strategy.

Learning analytics provide clear, actionable insights into your learning initiatives: from who is learning what, to how quickly they're progressing, and where targeted support is needed. Learning data delivers strategic value, helping to speed up onboarding, monitor compliance, and steer development where it matters most.

By actively linking learning data to your organizational goals, you strengthen critical areas such as:

- **Talent Management:** Less time spent on administration means more room for meaningful coaching and building a truly strategic talent pipeline.
- **Measurable Development:** Learning outcomes and their impact become visible, providing solid data to support your L&D investments.
- **Effective onboarding:** Linking learning directly to onboarding shortens ramp-up time and helps new hires become productive faster.
- **Reduced Administrative Load:** Automated registration, reporting, and certification significantly reduce manual tasks.
- **Compliance Insights:** Easily monitor and verify that employees meet mandatory training and certification requirements, no guesswork needed.
- **Workforce Planning:** Insight into current capabilities and future skill gaps enables accurate forecasting and better-informed talent decisions.

ROI as a strategic communication tool

To play a truly strategic role, Learning & Development must speak the language of the executive team⁶. That means the conversation goes beyond motivation or learning enjoyment; it's about demonstrating measurable, business-relevant value. ROI metrics are essential to positioning learning as a driver of performance, not just a cost.

In order to communicate the value of L&D effectively, make sure to make successes visible. Show how learning initiatives boost engagement and satisfaction while also improving performance and reducing turnover. This evidence-based approach builds credibility and strengthens the position of HR and L&D within the organization⁷.

⁶ Hone. (z.d.). Training ROI. Via <https://honehq.com/glossary/training-roi/#:~:text=The%20definition%20of%20the%20return,cost%20of%20running%20those%20programs.>

⁷ Maek Academie. (z.d.). 5 niveaus waarmee je aantoonbaar maakt wat jouw trainingen opleveren. Via <https://maekacademie.nl/5-niveaus-waarmee-je-aantoonbaar-maakt-wat-jouw-trainingen-opleveren/>

4 Skills-Based Development: Future-Proofing Your L&D Strategy

The labor market is changing rapidly. Flexible work and demographic shifts are changing the landscape, but the growing demand for skills is the real game changer. Traditional career paths and fixed job roles are giving way to a skills-based approach, which prioritizes individual talent and long-term growth potential. For organizations looking to stay future-ready, the message is clear: invest in upskilling and reskilling now, and build your L&D strategy on a strong foundation of skills.

The skill-based approach: from job titles to capabilities

In the past, credentials, years of experience, and job titles defined an employee's value. Today, the picture is very different. A skills-first approach to talent is gaining momentum⁸, shifting the focus from past roles to what people can actually do.

This shift is driving more and more organizations to adopt skill profiles: dynamic overviews of the competencies employees have, or need to develop. By focusing on skills, it becomes easier to identify internal talent, target development efforts, and respond quickly to changing market demands.

Always keeping insight into both available and missing skills allows companies to act proactively – seizing strategic opportunities and reducing risks. The result? Greater organizational agility and a clear competitive edge. Companies who believe in a skill-based approach, innovate faster, respond better to customer needs, and operate more efficiently than those still tied to traditional job models.

Putting skills at the core of your L&D strategy

The skills-based approach⁹ fundamentally shifts the focus within Learning & Development. Instead of generic training, the emphasis increasingly moves toward personalized learning paths that align both with business objectives and individual career ambitions. Key advantages are:

- **Targeted Development:** Employees learn precisely what they need to grow into new roles or adapt to changing responsibilities.
- **Faster Employability:** This reduces the time and cost associated with recruiting, onboarding, and training external talent.
- **Higher Engagement:** Employees feel recognized and supported in their personal development, leading to stronger motivation and retention.

In addition, this approach integrates seamlessly with strategic workforce planning. By gaining visibility into existing skills and critical gaps, your organization can anticipate future needs and take proactive action, when needed.

⁸ Edyoucated. Skill-Based Learning: Why Skills Are the Future of Work. Via <https://edyoucated.org/en-us/blog/skill-based-learning>

⁹ Studytube (z.d.). Upskilling: Wat is het en waarom is dit nu belangrijker dan ooit? Via <https://www.studytube.com/nl/blog/upskilling-wat-is-het-en-waarom-is-dit-nu-belangrijker-dan-ooit>

Upskilling & Reskilling:

The key to building an agile organization isn't just about attracting external talent, but just as much in developing your current workforce. Upskilling (enhancing existing skills) and reskilling (learning entirely new skills) make this possible.

Take, for example, a customer service representative with strong communication skills. With the right support, they could transition into a commercial role. Or think of an employee in a disappearing role, who could be retrained as a data analyst. By actively enabling this kind of development, you retain valuable knowledge, reduce recruitment costs, and increase employee loyalty.

According to PwC¹⁰, investing in upskilling and reskilling is one of the most strategic responses to today's rapidly evolving skill demands, across nearly every industry. Companies that align their L&D strategy accordingly don't just safeguard continuity and employability – they build resilience. With skills as your compass, you can steer toward growth, mobility, and agility.

Whitepaper tip!

Skill-based hiring is changing the way we recruit talent. The focus is shifting from degrees and job titles to specific skills. In our whitepaper, "Skill-based Hiring: The New Standard in Recruitment," we'll guide you through the key trends and developments in recruitment and provide practical tools for implementing your own skill-based hiring strategy!

¹⁰ PwC. Workforce Transformation. Via <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/business-transformation/workforce-transformation.html>

5 Creating a Learning Culture that Inspires and Drives Innovation

A strong learning culture isn't built in a day. It requires time, effort, investments, and creating the right conditions – from committed leadership to actively encouraging employees to keep developing. In this chapter, we turn theory into action by providing practical steps to help you build a workplace where continuous learning becomes second nature.

Lifelong learning

Learning isn't a one-off event, it's a continuous process. That's why "lifelong learning" lies at the heart of modern, future-focused organizations. It's about consistently building knowledge, refining skills, and expanding competencies. Ultimately, you create a workplace where learning is both accessible and actively encouraged. By embracing this mindset, your teams stay agile and are better equipped to adapt to new technologies, changing customer needs, and evolving business goals.

Smart use of learning software

In modern organizations and in today's labor market, digital learning platforms like Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Learning Experience Platforms (LXP), are key in building a strong learning culture. These software tools make learning more accessible, personalized, and measurable¹¹. Thanks to smart dashboards and learning analytics, these platforms also offer valuable insights into learning progress and engagement. This enables you to make targeted adjustments and embed learning more deeply into the rhythm of work.



Discover BCS Learning

Software for Learning and Development? At BCS, we know all about it. Meet BCS Learning, our learning software designed to facilitate learning and development for your entire organization. By combining personalized learning pathways with smart automation, we effortlessly bridge skill gaps and address compliance challenges. It's built for teams that want to achieve more with less effort.

¹¹ Josh Bersin, How To Build A High-Impact Learning Culture, 2010. <https://joshbersin.com/2010/06/how-to-build-a-high-impact-learning-culture/>



Encouraging employee ownership

A learning culture truly flourishes when employees take ownership of their own development. Those who proactively shape their growth not only learn more effectively, but are also better prepared for (internal) career opportunities. That's why it's essential to raise awareness around personal growth potential! Don't micromanage, empower employees to drive their own learning. Encourage them to reflect on their goals, ambitions, and the training that supports them. When people are actively involved in shaping their learning journey, their sense of ownership and motivation grows.

Leaders/ managers play a vital role in this. By asking meaningful questions, offering options, and regularly discussing development with employees, they keep learning top of mind and in motion.

Empowering learning through leadership

A learning culture that inspires needs managers who lead by example. They model learning behavior and make L&D a regular part of team conversations. When leaders actively invest in their own development – and share their insights and progress openly – they naturally encourage others to do the same. Strong leadership also means creating the right environment for learning. By regularly discussing learning goals, leaders help embed continuous development into the culture of everyday work.

Learning in the flow of work

To truly embed learning into the workday, development opportunities need to be available during work, not just around it. Think of micro-learnings, snack trainings, and on-demand access to information. This concept, often called "learning in the flow of work", removes barriers, increases relevance, and delivers immediate impact on performance¹².

Recognizing and rewarding learning initiatives

The principle still holds true: where attention goes, energy flows – and growth follows. This is especially true for learning. When you visibly acknowledge and celebrate learning efforts you send a clear message: Learning & Development isn't just an HR initiative or simple nice-to-have, it's a strategic driver of growth and resilience!

Recognition can take many forms. From formal certifications and internal awards to a simple shout-out in a team meeting or the integration of learning milestones into development plans. When employees feel seen and valued for their development, motivation and engagement follow naturally.



¹² Josh Bersin, A New Strategy For Corporate Learning: Growth In The Flow Of Work, 2022. <https://joshbersin.com/2022/08/a-new-strategy-for-corporate-learning-growth-in-the-flow-of-work/>

¹³ Josh Bersin, A New Paradigm For Corporate Training: Learning In The Flow Of Work, 2018. <https://joshbersin.com/2018/06/a-new-paradigm-for-corporate-training-learning-in-the-flow-of-work/>



Conclusion: A strong learning culture as a growth engine

Learning & Development is no longer optional, it's a core requirement for any organization that wants to stay future-ready. You've seen how to build a sustainable learning culture using smart technology, committed leadership, employee ownership, and integration into daily work.

In the end, learning isn't just an investment in people, but a strategic advantage for the entire organization. Those who prioritize lifelong learning are actively building the foundation for growth, for people and organizations, today and in the future.

A strong learning culture:

- Boosts motivation and engagement
- Accelerates knowledge sharing and innovation
- Improves individual and team performance
- Enables faster, more adaptive responses to change



6 BCS: Your Employee Journey, Our HR-software!



Every stage of the employee journey requires a targeted approach. BCS offers solutions to fully support you at every step. From the first contact with a candidate to continuous development within your organization, our software evolves with your needs. We provide specialized solutions for recruitment, onboarding, HRM, payroll, learning and development, flexible benefits, and file and absence management.

Our solutions are user-friendly, flexible, and reliable. You can deploy them individually or seamlessly integrate them into a complete system. The result? A fully integrated 'all-in-one' approach that delivers real impact.

- Modular solutions that work independently or integrate seamlessly
- Flexible systems that scale with your organization's needs
- Transparent pricing with no hidden costs

Your learning culture starts with software that makes learning accessible. BCS brings together everything you need to empower employees, track development, and make learning a seamless part of daily practice.

HR Software that truly makes a difference

BCS automates your HR processes, reducing administrative workload and freeing up time for what truly matters: shaping future-proof HR strategies, building a culture people want to be part of, and developing talent based on real skills.





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