Learning at work even more important in the new normal

COVID-19 has accelerated the demand for workplace learning and development, according to results from the Kahoot! 2020 Learning at Work Report

2020: An inflection point for workplace learning

2020 has been an unprecedented year for companies and organizations across the world. The shift to remote work has made learning and development (L&D) more challenging than ever for businesses and L&D professionals, but it has also offered us an opportunity to rethink how we deliver it. In these times, many businesses are using Kahoot! to engage and connect remote teams, as well as teams that continue to work onsite. Currently, 97% of Fortune 500 companies use Kahoot!’s uniquely engaging blended learning solution to onboard, train, and invest in their employees’ ongoing development, with 20 million participating players in organizations in the last 12 months. To gain insight into how today’s workforce thinks about learning and development in 2020 and beyond, we conducted a survey of professionals across the U.S., focusing on how workplace learning has changed since shifting remote and what professionals want to see in the future. Continue reading to view the results of this survey in the Kahoot! 2020 Learning at Work Report.

Nearly 1 in 2 professionals believe that working remotely has made learning and development more important than ever

When organizations unexpectedly transitioned to remote work earlier this year, many professionals found they needed new skills to be successful at their job, including learning new software, organization and efficiency skills for working at home as well as how to communicate effectively in a distributed team.

Working remotely was already on the rise before the pandemic, with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reporting nearly a quarter of professionals in the U.S. working at least partly remote in 2019. According to an HSBC Global Research report, nearly 1 in 5 U.S. employees want to work remotely 3 or more days per week after the pandemic, up from 1 in 25 before COVID-19. However, COVID-19 created a widespread shift that rapidly accelerated organizations’ technology adoption, and many are still working to catch up, as reported in a McKinsey Global Survey. Nearly 9 in 10 organization leaders have reported skill gaps or expected skill gaps in their organizations. Now, as the ability to fill talent gaps has been identified as a key factor of organizations’ success during COVID-19, many feel that learning and development is more important than ever to perform their job well.

When asked, nearly half of respondents said that learning and development is more important to their success at work since they began working remotely. Only 7% have found it less important, and the remaining respondents reported it to be as important as before the pandemic.

Since the shift to remote work, how would you describe the importance of learning and development to your success at work?

- More important: 46%
- Less important: 7%
- About the same: 47%
Since the shift to remote work, how would you rate the learning and development offered by your employer?

- Better since it has been delivered remotely: 25%
- Worse since it has been delivered remotely: 14%
- The same/training hasn’t changed: 47%
- It has stopped: 5%
- I have no experience of it/cannot say: 9%

When you or your team are able to return to the office, how would you prefer to receive training?

- More virtual training, as a group: 10%
- More virtual training, at my own pace: 31%
- Some virtual and some in-person training: 46%
- All in-person training: 13%

The pandemic has accelerated a shift towards virtual learning, but a combination of remote and in-person learning is here to stay.

The pandemic and the shift to remote work has made virtual training mainstream in many organizations—especially convenient, self-paced learning—and over 4 in 10 surveyed would prefer their organization to continue delivering training fully virtually, even when back at the office. Almost all respondents (nearly 9 in 10) expect virtual training to be part of their organization’s L&D toolbox.

However, the most popular preference for training is a blended learning system, with nearly 1 in 2 professionals saying they would prefer a mix of in-person and virtual training once they can be together at the office.
While most are coping with working remotely, nearly two thirds of professionals feel team spirit has lessened since the shift to working from home, business teams globally have come to appreciate the importance of social interaction and connection to workplace engagement, motivation and efficiency. Though, while the pandemic has amplified it globally, the challenge of workplace engagement is not new.

In Gallup’s State of the Global Workplace report, released in 2017, the results showed 85% of employees were not engaged or actively disengaged at work, and that this resulted in up to $7 trillion in lost productivity, not to mention unquantifiable losses in innovation and creativity. On the other hand, when organizations get engagement right, productivity and profitability are shown to rise significantly.

While many organizations have made efforts to encourage engagement in these times, nearly 2 in 3 respondents say that team spirit at their workplace has lessened to some degree while working remotely, and nearly 3 in 10 report feeling less engaged at work. These numbers suggest that driving engagement more effectively is still a key area to address for many organizations.

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A strong organizational culture of learning drives employee engagement

Increasing learner engagement is one of the top priorities of L&D professionals globally, according to LinkedIn’s 2020 Workplace Learning Report. One essential element this survey highlights is whether a company has a strong culture of learning. According to Josh Bersin, founder of Bersin by Deloitte, “The single biggest driver of business impact is the strength of an organization’s learning culture.” When asked, the majority of respondents (more than 50%) said they feel more engaged at work when their organization has a strong culture of learning, making this a key area of interest for companies globally, especially during the pandemic and beyond as many team members continue working remotely.

How successfully are you maintaining a social connection with your team while working remotely?

- Team spirit is as strong as ever: 35%
- Team spirit isn’t as strong, but we’re OK: 52%
- We are struggling to maintain team spirit: 13%

How has the shift to remote work affected your level of motivation at work?

- More engaged: 24%
- Less engaged: 29%
- The same as working on-site: 47%

How do you feel when your organization has a strong culture of learning?

- More engaged: 54%
- Less engaged: 8%
- About the same: 28%
- Cannot say: 10%

Methodology

This report is based on data from a survey of 400+ professionals working remotely in the United States, conducted in October 2020.