



# Future of Learning Driving value from L&D data roundtable

November 2024





## The Future of Learning: Driving value from L&D data

Using data to guide decisions is becoming crucial to successful learning and development (L&D). That's why we made it the main focus of our latest Future of Learning roundtable.

In November 2024, we held our first co-located session in London and Manchester. It was hosted by:

▶ **Louise Scott-Worrall**

Head of Learning Services,  
KPMG

▶ **Adam Caldwell**

Director of Learning Services,  
KPMG

Our three guest speakers were: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ **Matt Kesby**

Instructional Design Manager,  
Omniplex Learning

▶ **Dr. Dave Tarrant**

Senior Learning Advisor,  
Open Data Institute

▶ **Olivia Larkin**

Head of Skills and Workforce Policy,  
The City of London Corporation



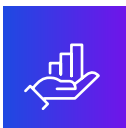
## Driving forces

- ▶ **Louise Scott-Worrall** opened the proceedings by examining what's driving the importance of data in an L&D context.

Data is essential to the task of identifying skills gaps – and for the move from just-in-case to just-in-time training.

Without data, organisations can't deliver the right content at the point of need. Nor can they ensure it's relevant, reflects employees' learning preferences and supports business objectives.

At the same time, data can help L&D teams measure the tangible benefits they're achieving. It's how they can go beyond a purely transactional relationship with the board, to become a genuine strategic partner.



## People, metrics and purpose

- ▶ **Matt Kesby** explored three key aspects of using data: making learning 'people first'; getting the metrics and analytics right; and knowing why you're using data in the first place.

### People first

Learning should adapt to how people behave, not how firms wish them to. As one attendee put it:

**“Everybody learns in different ways. There can be no one-size-fits-all approach. The focus should be on what individuals need within their roles.”**

However, **Matt** outlined a number of barriers to making this happen, drawing on a number of studies:

- The majority of organisations (**53%**) are only just beginning to provide learning in the flow of work
- More than four in ten learning leaders point to a lack of engagement (**41%**) and time to learn (**42%**) among their workforces
- Three fifths of workers (**62%**) feel their performance and career aspirations aren't supported by their employer

He noted another common barrier to people-first training: the learning management system (LMS).

Staff typically use their firm's LMS because it pushes training content out to them, rather than experiencing it as an engaging and motivating platform for professional development. Yet learning should be what Matt called a 'watercooler conversation' – something staff are excited about.

### Metrics and analytics

The value in data comes from the insights you can gain by analysing the right metrics – which should be tied to your strategic priorities. Yet some 84% of L&D functions don't measure their impact through analytics, or are only just exploring how to do so.

Again, L&D teams face a number of hurdles when it comes to setting the right metrics and carrying out the necessary analysis.

- Half of all measures (**50%**) are purely 'vanity' indicators, such as how many times a course is

accessed. They don't measure any sort of meaningful impact

- Two fifths of learning leaders (**40%**) say their organisations need more analytics capabilities
- Two thirds (**67%**) highlight a lack of time to collect and analyse data, while **60%** bemoan insufficient time for people to learn how to do so

These issues are neatly encapsulated by the words of a client who told Omniplex Learning:



**Collecting data takes a long time, which we don't have. So we rely on basic LMS metrics.**





Meanwhile, one of our attendees hinted at a bigger problem.



**We're only now seeing the impact of the learning we implemented a decade ago.**

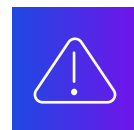
**How can we measure the value of what we're doing this quarter or financial year?**

### Clarity of purpose

The best learning will achieve little if businesses don't know they're offering it, and employees don't know why they're doing it.

For **94%** of L&D leaders, the main purpose behind their learning propositions is to enable continuous improvement. Or as a client of Omniplex Learning describes it, "mapping learning pathways to inspire career pathways."

Despite this, almost three quarters of firms (**73%**) currently deliver no personalised learning, or only a basic version of it. The majority of leaders (**60%**) say the same about learning in the flow of work, while **41%** admit that they struggle to create engaging content.



### Data risks and literacy

- ▶ **Dr. Dave Tarrant** began by examining two inherent risks L&D teams must be aware of when collecting and analysing data, and acting on the resulting insights.

First, unintended consequences. The metrics organisations choose to measure often end up having unforeseen, negative effects. For instance, when the Home Office instructed police forces to respond to more burglaries, more of them were recorded. Six months later, "rising crime levels" hit the headlines. The numbers had changed, but did that reflect more crime, or just the change in policy to record more? In reality, crime levels hadn't changed.

Second, bias. There are risks of bias at every stage of the data lifecycle. How information is collected, who from, labelling, metric-setting, and the programming of

algorithms are all influenced by the unconscious biases of the people involved.

Minimising that bias requires trade-offs.

The mantra goes: the more source information you gather, the deeper the insights you can extract, and the better you can understand your skills gaps and employees' learning needs. But this is rarely the case. Your data lake can quickly become a data swamp.

Research highlights significant risks for the **40%** of organisations that lack data analytics capabilities.

Two thirds of them lack the time to filter the data they collect – despite half of it amounting to little more than vanity metrics.

The implications of these challenges go further than missing opportunities to identify critical learning needs. There's a danger of misinterpreting the noise as actionable insight. When vanity metrics or poorly contextualised data are mistaken for meaningful information, businesses risk implementing misguided strategies, misaligning resources, and even reinforcing incorrect assumptions.

The explainability of your algorithms is another trade-off to be managed. Accuracy must not be at the expense of understanding how they work.

A well-designed algorithm might need only two clear rules to deliver useful results. Additional rules can be layered in to gain small percentage-point improvements in accuracy, but this comes with a trade-off. Increased complexity not only makes algorithms harder to explain; it also amplifies the risk of bias and overfitting, which can undermine reliability and fairness.

Striking the right balance between simplicity and precision is the key to building effective and trustworthy data models.

## The importance of data literacy

In light of these challenges, data literacy is becoming a critical skill for L&D teams, **Dave** affirmed.

Data literacy is defined as the ability to think critically about data in different contexts; and to examine the impact of different approaches to collecting, using and sharing it.

The good news is that as gen AI takes on the tasks involved in delivering just-in-time learning, L&D teams will have more time for critical thinking. They can focus on using data to meet their firm's skills needs and employees' learning preferences; and on the risks this presents.

To support that process, the Open Data Institute has developed a Consequence and Risk Evaluation (CARE) tool. CARE helps organisations explore the implications of their data from all angles – looking at both the desired outcomes and the likely unintended consequences.

**Dave** also highlighted the importance of the emerging role of the 'intelligent data customer': someone who looks at their firms' data use through the customers' eyes (or learners' eyes in an L&D context). They understand the risks and implications of what the business is trying to achieve, and act as a bridge between implementation and governance.



## The promise of AI

- ▶ **Olivia Larkin** summarised the key findings of a recent report by the City of London Corporation and KPMG, on the potential impact of AI in financial and professional services.

The study forecasts the likely productivity gains for various subsectors within this space, in three different role types: support, control and revenue-generating.

The main headline from our analysis is a projected **50%** productivity boost thanks to AI by 2030 – worth some **£35 billion** to the sector. The greatest proportion of this (**£9.6 billion**) should be seen in retail banking.

Support tasks have the greatest capacity to benefit from AI, with a predicted **58%** productivity boost. That compares to **49%** in control functions, and **44%** in revenue-generating roles.

We also discovered a strong uptick in demand for AI skills among financial and professional services employers. In particular, the number of ads for conversational and generative AI abilities soared by **150%**.

As **Olivia** underlined, leaders in the industry often point to a lack of the necessary skills as a barrier to embracing AI and reaping the benefits. And many admit to not knowing what skills they actually need.

But the fact is that many of them are conventional business skills: strategic and creative thinking, emotional intelligence, communication and so on.

In their report, KPMG and the Corporation set out a ten-step framework for maximising the benefits of AI. This covers the end-to-end journey, from clarifying your

purpose, through to implementation, measuring the impact and continuous monitoring and iteration.



## In a nutshell

Ending the session, **Louise** emphasised the clear signal coming from the discussion:



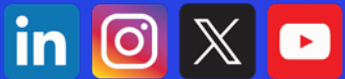
**It's time for L&D to take its seat at the top table.**

The pressure is on organisations is to secure the skills needed to extract value from data, and drive the productivity gains that AI offers. And that means that they need effective learning more than ever.

It's down to L&D functions to deliver that – and to use data to demonstrate its impact.



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