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10 research insights to shape your communications in 2025

This guide has been created from a session on research insights facilitated by Martin Couzins, CEO, Insights Media, and Dr Nigel Paine, an expert in leadership and organisational learning.

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This guide discusses five topics:

- Business survival
- AI
- Managers
- Skills
- Well-being

Why these insights?

Learning professionals face a persistent challenge. Whether you are internal or on the supply side of the industry, that challenge is creating cut through communications that catch the attention of your target audience - stakeholders, employees, customers, partners and/or peers.

External insights are key to building a compelling narrative that talks to the challenges facing these audiences. This report uses a set of curated data points to highlight these challenges and provides ideas for how to use them to build compelling narratives.

The insights in this report explore:

Understanding market trends and insights

Why it is important to stay connected to the external environment rather than focusing in and insulating yourself from reality. This helps organisations adapt and improve internal and external conversations.

The role of AI and generative AI tools

The widespread use of AI by individuals requires organisations to embrace it strategically, rather than resist it. This has major implications for the learning function.

Redefining the role of learning teams

With the rise of AI-powered learning tools, learning teams need to redefine their value proposition and facilitate the effective use of these technologies, rather than compete with them.

Supporting and developing managers

It is critically important you provide managers with the right support, development, and context-specific guidance, as poorly supported managers can have a detrimental impact on the organisation.

Rethinking skills development

The traditional top-down, competency-based approach to skills development is being challenged. There needs to be a focus on more dynamic, team-driven models.

Prioritising employee well-being

The alarming statistics on employee well-being underscore the need for organisations to make this a top priority, as it underpins productivity, engagement, and overall organisational success.





Business survival

The stats

45% of CEOs doubt their company's current trajectory will keep them viable beyond the next decade — up from 39% just 12 months earlier

(Source: PwC's 27th Annual Global CEO Survey, PwC)

93% of business leaders say their role is to ensure their workforce has the time and resources to continuously learn

(Source: ReimagineHR, Gartner)

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Business survival risks

- 45% of CEOs doubt their company's long-term viability, up from 39% last year, meaning leaders focus on survival today but neglect future transformation.

Learning reality vs aspiration

- 93% of leaders claim they provide time and resources for continuous learning, yet the workforce often disagrees. There's a significant gap between leadership's perceptions and the workforce's lived experiences.

Strategic focus

- CEOs and L&D leaders must balance short-term survival with mid-term extension and long-term transformation (McKinsey's Three Horizons model).
- Leaders must carve out time to think strategically, beyond immediate tactical responses.

Actions



Hold the mirror up to the organisation

- Survey employees to understand gaps between leadership claims and workforce reality.
- Present findings to leadership, building a narrative for change and strategic alignment.

Facilitate sense-making

- Use these data points to spark meaningful discussions internally and externally.
- Encourage learning teams to challenge assumptions and align learning with future business needs.

Think beyond the now

- Dedicate time to strategic thinking every six months. Explore "What if?" scenarios, including disruptive trends like AI.
- Create actionable plans for mid-term extension and long-term innovation to future-proof the organisation.



AI

The stats

61% of business leaders believe AI is a game changer for their industry, but only 11% have made significant progress in digital transformation

(Source: [Leading through the great disruption, Adecco](#))

AI users report significant benefits: **90% say it helps them save time**, 85% say it helps them focus on their most important work, 84% say it enhances creativity, and 83% say it makes their work more enjoyable

(Source: [2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report, Microsoft](#))

In the workplace, **73.8% of ChatGPT accounts are non-corporate** vs Gemini (94.4%) and Bard (95.9%)

(Source: [Shadow AI: how employees are leading the charge in AI adoption, Cyberhaven](#))

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AI adoption gaps

- 61% of business leaders see AI as a game changer, yet only 11% have progressed significantly with digital transformation. While AI benefits individuals (time-saving, focus, creativity), organisational adoption lags, creating a dangerous “shadow AI” culture where employees use AI tools unsupervised.

AI as a learning tool

- Generative AI acts as an on-demand learning tool, allowing individuals to “self-engineer” their development
- This disrupts traditional learning models, challenging L&D teams to redefine their value and role in facilitating secure, effective AI use.

Organisational challenge

- Businesses must address AI adoption systematically to align processes, prevent risks, and maximise productivity gains
- Learning professionals must embrace AI as a complement, not a competitor, to existing tools and strategies.

Actions



Facilitate AI Adoption

- Engage leadership to formalise AI integration across processes and address security concerns
- Guide employees on responsible AI use to prevent shadow AI risks.

Redefine L&D’s role

- Position AI as a learning enabler and redefine how learning teams add value in an AI-driven environment
- Support self-directed learning while balancing human-led development for collaboration, critical thinking, and trust-building.

Lead the AI conversation

- Advocate for clear organisational strategies around AI adoption
- Promote discussions on AI’s role in enhancing learning processes, addressing its benefits and shortcomings.



Managers

The stats

80% of managers say they became a manager because they were good at their job, not because they wanted to manage people

(Source: Building Better Managers, Mind Tools)

50% of managers did not receive any support from their organisation during their transition into the role

(Source: Building Better Managers, Mind Tools)

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Key challenges

- Many managers are “unconscious managers,” juggling human and operational challenges without training or mentoring
- A lack of context-specific development creates ineffective managers and wastes resources.

Impact

- Unsupported managers risk team breakdowns, employee exits, and lost productivity
- Managers are critical for organisational success, particularly as AI reshapes workplace dynamics.

Actions



Prioritise manager development

- Identify managers as a priority audience and provide tailored, context-specific support
- Use data and feedback to measure the impact of learning interventions on managers and their teams.

Adopt a practical, human-centred approach

- Avoid generic “one-size-fits-all” leadership programmes; focus on real-world scenarios managers face
- Offer mentoring, coaching, and opportunities to learn from experienced leaders.

Tell the impact story

- Internally, advocate for manager support by demonstrating improvements in team performance and moral
- Externally, gather insights and success stories to showcase how tailored manager development delivers results.



Skills

The stats

The top two barriers to successfully implementing a reskilling strategy:

- 1) **managers not being incentivised** to give employees time and space
- 2) **poor quality information** about the current skills profile of the workforce

[\(Source: Reskilling for Sustainable Growth, Corporate Research Forum\)](#)

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Barriers to reskilling

- Managers are not incentivised to prioritise employee development
- Organisations lack quality data on workforce skills, undermining reskilling strategies.

The skills disconnect

- Organisations aspire to be “skills-based,” but day-to-day pressures and rigid structures (e.g., outdated job descriptions) prevent progress
- Complex competency frameworks often fail to translate into practical action.

Dynamic solutions

- Skills development must happen at the team level, empowering individuals to identify, evolve, and organise the skills they need
- Roles should be fluid and aligned with interests and growth, moving beyond rigid job descriptions.

Actions



Focus on practical skills implementation

- Shift skills development to team level, enabling teams to identify and address their skill needs dynamically
- Use tools like AI to support continuous learning and role evolution.

Simplify skills strategies

- Avoid overly complex competency frameworks. Focus on actionable, practical solutions tailored to organisational realities.

Challenge rigid structures

- Redefine job descriptions as dynamic, evolving guidelines that encourage skill growth and role adaptability.
- Advocate for roles that empower individuals to pursue their strengths and interests, contributing to organisational flexibility.

Sense-check skills narratives

- Be cautious about buzzwords like “skills-based organisation”. Provide clear, realistic messaging grounded in your organisation’s context and needs.



Well-being

The stats

21% of employees feel their employer fully supports their mental well-being

(Source: [People at Work, ADP Research Institute](#))

Two in five workers believe **the world of work is fundamentally broken**

(Source: [2024 Global Talent Trends, Mercer](#))

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Impact on organisations

- Poor well-being leads to reduced productivity, disengaged teams, and increased burnout.
- No team wants to see colleagues broken by work, yet it happens frequently, reflecting a failure of organisational care.

Well-being as a foundation

- Employee well-being underpins productivity, engagement, and organisational success. Without it, other initiatives—reskilling, AI adoption, or leadership development—cannot succeed.

Actions



Prioritise well-being conversations

- Promote open discussions about well-being across teams and leadership to remove stigma and build understanding
- Encourage leaders to actively role model care and prioritise employee health.

Embed well-being into organisational culture

- Make well-being central to all workplace strategies, ensuring it is not a tick-box exercise
- Align well-being initiatives with broader company values, such as supporting communities and supply chains.

Measure and act on impact

- Gather employee feedback to assess well-being and identify pain points. Use data to drive meaningful change
- Develop interventions that are practical, proactive, and responsive to employee needs.

Shaping compelling communications in 2025

As learning professionals, the role you play in shaping the organisation's narrative has never been more critical. The insights presented in this guide highlight the pressing challenges faced by businesses today—be it survival, AI adoption, manager development, reskilling, or employee well-being. These challenges are not isolated; they intersect, amplifying their impact on the workforce.

To connect meaningfully with your audiences in the year ahead, anchor your communications in these realities. Use the data points as a foundation for compelling stories that resonate with stakeholders, employees, and leadership.



For example

Speak to business survival with empathy, highlighting how learning and skills development are essential for innovation and long-term growth.

Frame conversations around AI not as a threat but as an opportunity to empower individuals and redefine organisational processes.

Address the managerial gap with actionable support, showing the link between strong management, healthier teams and increased performance and productivity. Simplify the skills agenda by focusing on practical, team-driven approaches that encourage growth and adaptability.

Champion well-being as the foundation for all other priorities—without it, productivity and engagement cannot thrive.

By rooting your messaging in these challenges and providing actionable, human-centred solutions, you demonstrate deep understanding and leadership.

Whether internally or externally, this approach positions you as a trusted voice, helping your organisation—and its people—navigate uncertainty and thrive in the year ahead.



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