HR & L&D International Survey 2025

Executive Outcomes Summary — compiled and facilitated by Dr. Laurence H. Brown

1. Overview and Context

Over the past month, 31 international HR and Learning & Development professionals generously shared their views through our brief survey exploring how training and problem-solving approaches are working in practice.

These respondents represent a wide mix of sectors and regions, but they share a common concern: ensuring that learning investments translate into visible impact on the ground.

This summary brings together the key patterns I've seen emerging, a snapshot of where organisations stand today, what's proving effective, and where they are still struggling to connect training to measurable results.

2. What We Heard: Key Challenges and Priorities

When asked to identify their four biggest learning challenges, **nearly two-thirds (62%) highlighted budget constraints**, closely followed by **participant engagement (53%)** and **demonstrating visible Return on Investment (47%)**.

A recurring message was that training quality itself is not the core issue, it's the ability to show value in ways senior leaders recognise. Many respondents admitted that good intentions still outpace systems for follow-up or data capture. Several noted that internal support and alignment between HR, line managers, and senior leadership remain inconsistent.

Time also surfaced as a quieter but important pressure: only a small proportion explicitly mentioned it, yet the tone of open comments suggested a growing fatigue with compressed schedules and "tick-box" workshops.

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3. Learning Preferences and Methodologies

If there was one clear consensus, it is this: **face-to-face learning continues to lead the way.** An overwhelming **94% of respondents** rated in-person workshops as the most effective and best received, even among digitally enabled teams. Half also value **online or virtual sessions (50%)**, often when blended with **peer-learning elements (41%)**.

This suggests a pragmatic hybrid model rather than a full digital shift. Participants want live dialogue, practical coaching, and real-time collaboration — ideally supported afterward by digital reinforcement tools rather than replaced by them.

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4. Measurement and ROI Realities

When we explored how organisations measure learning impact, **43% acknowledged they do not yet have a clear method for tracking ROI.** Several commented that "we know it's valuable, but we can't prove it."

A minority reported tracking application metrics within six weeks of training, but this remains the exception. The absence of consistent metrics reinforces why "visible ROI" appears as a top challenge — not because it isn't happening, but because it's rarely documented or communicated in leadership language.

As a facilitator, I see this as an opportunity rather than a weakness: it points to a genuine appetite for sharper tools, shared accountability, and practical post-workshop mechanisms such as **manager debrief kits**, **on-demand refreshers**, or **micro-coaching check-ins**.

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5. Emerging Skills and Development Needs

In terms of where learning demand is growing, the survey results point clearly toward the future:

- **Coaching and mentoring skills — 50%** marked these as the most sought-after capabilities.
- **AI, data literacy, and digital awareness — 41%** identified these as their fastest-rising needs.

This combination — human coaching capability alongside digital fluency — captures the leadership evolution underway. Organisations want technically confident people who can still connect, listen, and co-create solutions with empathy.

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6. Trusted Partnerships and Advisory Gaps

One of the more striking findings is the near-absence of enduring external partnerships: **none of the respondents reported maintaining a trusted relationship with a regular training advisor or coach-facilitator.**

This lack of continuity limits the capacity for reflective learning and long-term behaviour change. Many respondents described ad-hoc or transactional engagements rather than ongoing strategic alignment. It's clear that HR leaders value having an external sounding board — but most don't yet have one they rely on.

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7. Practical Implications for Future Sessions

As I interpret these results, three design implications stand out for our future workshops and collaborative programmes:

1. **Bridge the ROI gap** — integrate simple, shared metrics early in the learning design process so results can be demonstrated within 30–60 days.
2. **Blend live and digital** — retain the human energy of in-person sessions while reinforcing learning through short, targeted digital nudges.
3. **Build continuity** — move from one-off training to sustained advisory partnerships that offer coaching, community, and accountability.

These align closely with what I already emphasise in facilitative problem-solving labs: make learning visible, actionable, and owned by participants.

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8. Closing Reflections

Overall, this international snapshot gives a reassuringly clear signal: the appetite for **real conversation, shared problem-solving, and measurable progress** has never been higher. While budgets and ROI pressures remain real, the survey confirms that teams still believe in the power of interactive learning — especially when it feels relevant, applied, and supported beyond the classroom.

As your coach-facilitator, I take encouragement from this. It tells me that our focus on **practical design thinking**, **manager involvement**, and **behavioural follow-through** is exactly where it needs to be. The challenge now is to make that consistency the norm, not the exception.

Together, we can ensure that each learning investment truly earns its place — by turning insight into daily action, and workshops into lasting workplace change.

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Direct Quote from a Respondent:

12. What would true success look like for you after a problem-solving, design thinking training workshop?

"True success for us after a problem-solving and design thinking workshop would be evident at three levels:

1. Individual growth:

Participants feel empowered, more confident in their ability to challenge assumptions and generate solutions, and they leave with practical tools they can apply immediately.

We would want to see heightened emotional intelligence, stronger listening skills, and a sense of ownership for positive change.

2. Team and departmental outcomes:

Teams begin to break down silos and collaborate more openly across functions. Success looks like better quality conversations, smoother communication, and a willingness to co-create solutions rather than defaulting to old patterns.

It also means staff morale and motivation increase because they see their input being valued and acted upon.

3. Organisational impact:

At the wider organisational level, success means that ideas generated in the workshop translate into concrete actions – whether through new processes, improved customer or community outcomes, or more inclusive decision-making.

Longer-term, success looks like a measurable Return on Investment: reduced friction between departments, higher levels of engagement, more efficient problem-solving, and demonstrable progress towards strategic goals.

Ultimately, true success is not just running a good workshop but embedding a culture of design thinking, where creativity, inclusivity and problem-solving become part of everyday practice."