

AI IN LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITIES, PRESSURES AND PROGRESS



A preview of the Learning & Performance Institute's May 2026 research report based on 692 learning, talent and people leaders.

THE RESPONSE DATA



This is a qualitative, insight-led study. It is not a quantitative benchmark. Our goal was to understand the real experiences, perceptions, and priorities of learning leaders in the context of AI.

692

Learning, talent, and people leaders registering for the LPI's LEARNING LIVE:AI Edition event.

ROLE LEVELS

CLOs, Heads of Learning, learning directors, people leaders, talent leaders, and senior functional specialists.

1,997

Each respondent could provide up to three AI challenges, yielding almost two thousand usable non-blank challenge statements.

10

Interconnected priority themes spanning capability, implementation, governance, culture, leadership and operational readiness for AI in L&D.

2.89

Responses per person, on average. 638 respondents (92.2%) completed all three challenge fields.

8

Industry groups were analysed, revealing shared pressures and emphasis shifts across sectors.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS



Open Ended

Open ended questions to capture diverse views.



Thematic Analysis

All data was coded thematically to identify patterns, trends, and recurring insights across the dataset.



Cross-industry lens

Findings have been analysed across industries and seniority levels to gain a richer comparison.



KEY FINDINGS

Our data suggests that AI adoption in L&D is best understood not as hype, but as a capability transition. Most organisations are still building the foundations required for effective and sustainable AI use before they can fully optimise for scale and measurable value.



71%

Mentioned at least one readiness issue spanning skills, adoption or governance.



45%

Raised AI literacy, skills and confidence as a major challenge.



34%

Focused on use cases, implementation and workflow integration as challenges.



31%

Highlighted concerns around tools, vendor choice and pace of change.



27%

Referenced governance, ethics, security and compliance.

WHAT LEADERS ARE STRUGGLING WITH



AI LITERACY, SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

Raised by 308 respondents (44.5%)

AI literacy, skills and confidence stands out as one of the most important themes in the dataset because it underpins progress in almost every other area. Across the responses, there is a clear sense that many learning teams are still building a practical understanding of what AI is, how different tools work, where their limitations lie, and what responsible use looks like in context. This is not simply a matter of technical knowledge. It is equally a question of confidence: respondents want to know how to use AI credibly, safely and effectively in their own work, without either overcommitting or falling behind.

The significance of this theme is that AI literacy is not being pursued as an abstract capability. Respondents are not asking for general awareness for its own sake; they are looking for enough fluency to evaluate options, make sound decisions, adapt workflows and guide others. In effect, literacy is functioning as the enabling layer beneath adoption. This suggests that a large part of the profession remains in a capability-building phase of maturity. Until that foundation is strengthened, progress in implementation, governance, and value creation is likely to remain uneven.

ILLUSTRATIVE SIGNALS FROM THE DATASET



Authentic anonymised excerpts from the challenge data

“Building confidence across the learning team to use AI tools safely and effectively in day-to-day work.”

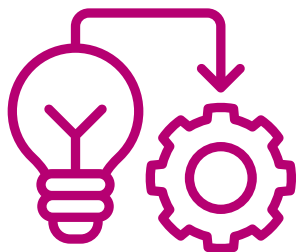
“Helping learning professionals develop enough AI fluency to make informed decisions rather than relying on trial and error.”

“How to upskill the business for AI-driven future”



Insight

Many learning leaders are seeing uneven confidence levels, mixed digital capability, and uncertainty about what good practice looks like in day-to-day work. They need fluency programmes that are tiered by role and proficiency rather than delivered as a single generic course.



USE CASES, IMPLEMENTATION AND WORKFLOW INTEGRATION

Raised by 235 respondents (34.0%)

The prominence of use cases, implementation and workflow integration suggests that the profession has moved decisively beyond general curiosity. Respondents are not simply asking whether AI matters; they are asking where it is genuinely useful and how it can be embedded into the day-to-day realities of learning work. This includes practical questions about where AI can reduce effort, improve speed, enhance quality, or support new forms of performance assistance. The emphasis here is operational rather than conceptual: the focus is on applications that solve real problems, not on novelty alone.

At the same time, the data suggests that identifying promising use cases is only the first step. Many organisations appear able to see where AI could add value, but struggle to integrate those possibilities into established systems, processes, approval structures and team norms. This is where interest in AI often turns into operational friction. The central challenge is not simply to find compelling examples, but to make them repeatable, scalable and workable in context. This points to a more demanding phase of maturity, in which the real differentiator is not awareness of AI's potential, but the ability to embed it successfully in practice.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE FULL REPORT

- ✓ Full thematic analysis across all ten challenge areas
- ✓ Seniority-level comparisons
- ✓ Industry -level analysis and pressure profiles
- ✓ Strategic interpretation and recommendations
- ✓ Organisational maturity analysis and cluster mapping



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