



High Priority Drivers for Learning Professionals – 2011 ASTD Forum Assessment

Many work and life changes are affecting the field of learning. A few of these changes include moving from formal training as a go-to event in a classroom to 24/7, any-place, continuous learning that may be individual or social; technologies that allow the capability for immersive simulations; and a diverse global workforce comprised of four generations of workers. In the ASTD Forum, the dilemma of making changes that transition an organization into a more holistic, work/learn ecosystem aligned with future needs has been a highlight of the past 36 months.

Forum members are focused on moving to a nascent future state as displayed in this chart:

From	To
Lone Ranger	Member of a Collaborative Team that co-designs solutions
Content only	Content within a Context and based on the unique Community
Learning as an event	Learning as a Journey
Only Classrooms	24/7 access to myriad learning assets
Rigid Formality	Organic ecosystem
“Sage of the Stage”	“Guide of the Side”
Being the source of information and doing the research	Creating the environment where the customer is the source of information and the solutions
Active teaching	Active and continuous learning
Students	Engaged participants and collaborators
Training	Work performance and continuous learning
A Job	A Practice
Teacher	Designer, Architect, Anthropologist, and Coach
Synchronous	Synchronous, asynchronous, blended, and integrated

The topics members work on as they connect, collaborate, and share their learning practices that build organizational capability include themes such as the future role of learning professionals and the future of leadership. One year a focus was innovation and another it was the importance of “space and place.” In 2010 the members added the Human-Centered Design discipline to their collective repertoire in order to make solutions that are driven by the needs, desires, and context of the people being designed for, e.g. the clients or customers.

Driven by the needs of their respective organizations, ASTD Forum members started 2011 by sharing important work challenges and initiatives. The purpose of the assessment was not to serve as an industry standard, but to simply assist the ASTD Forum consortia focus plans and resources in a direction that provides the greatest value to members during the coming year. However, in order to have a more

general perspective, the same four-question assessment was sent to other learning professionals associated with ASTD including LearnShare members.

The assessment requested responses to four questions:

1. What learning content areas do you need to focus on in 2011?
2. In terms of effectiveness and efficiency of learning processes, what is your focus in 2011?
3. What is your learning function accountable to deliver?
4. What are the key outcomes your learning function must deliver for your company?

An interesting aspect of the results is that while the learning/human capital/talent communities are saturated with innovative tools and techniques for delivery and web conversations on design around, i.e., formal vs. informal, social learning vs. social media, overall indicators from this sample point to the needs of members as more traditional.

For the 238 respondents, over 25 percent indicated that the top content areas driving their practices are:

- leadership development
- change management
- employee engagement
- coaching skills
- performance improvement.

Over 20 percent of the respondents indicated that the top processes their respective learning functions were responsible for are:

- alignment of learning with business strategy
- evaluation of learning
- communities of practice
- experiential opportunities
- benchmarking other learning groups.

Over 30 percent of those participating in the assessment indicated that the deliverables their learning function was responsible for are:

- development and design of learning assets
- delivery of learning assets
- people development
- evaluation of some training
- some internal training
- coaching
- all internal training
- management of outsourced training
- performance management.

The key outcomes that need to be delivered by the learning function to the respective organizations for over 30 percent of the respondents are:

- performance improvements
- organizational business results
- new skills
- on boarding
- employee engagement
- employee satisfaction
- strategic and action plans.

As in most general, broad-brush assessments, several indicators stand out as “interesting” results, or, more definitively, conundrums that need probing further. One such result is the top two key outcomes are “performance improvements” and “organizational business results.” However, the top two

deliverables are development and design of learning assets and delivery of learning assets and four of the remaining seven involve formal training. Much evidence-based research indicates that performance is affected by informal learning, social learning, and even non-training solutions such as environmental factors, managerial expectations, tools, and incentives. Developing, designing, and delivering more training will not necessarily affect organizational performance.

Along the same lines of discussion, from the selection of internal processes, alignment of learning with business strategy, evaluation of learning, communities of practice, experiential opportunities, and benchmarking other learning groups, only one is directly related to formal training.

Another noticeable result is the differences between the Forum and the “at-large” group. Key among these is the higher focus in the Forum on:

- career planning, learning about learning, and leader’s as teachers in question one.
- social media, social learning practices, experiential opportunities, learning about learning methods, role of learning designers, and rationalizing curriculum in question two.
- executive development experiences in question three.
- new skills, strategic and action plans, and some internal training in question four.

As is expected, differences between 2010 and 2011 also surfaced in many questions. What are the major reasons for these differences? Are they related to the economy?

Even with the results generating myriad questions and further probing needed, the results of this assessment are a great jumping-off place for learning professionals. The findings provide valuable information for developing 2011 roadmaps and pathways to assist learning professionals in general.

The more detailed responses to the four questions are:

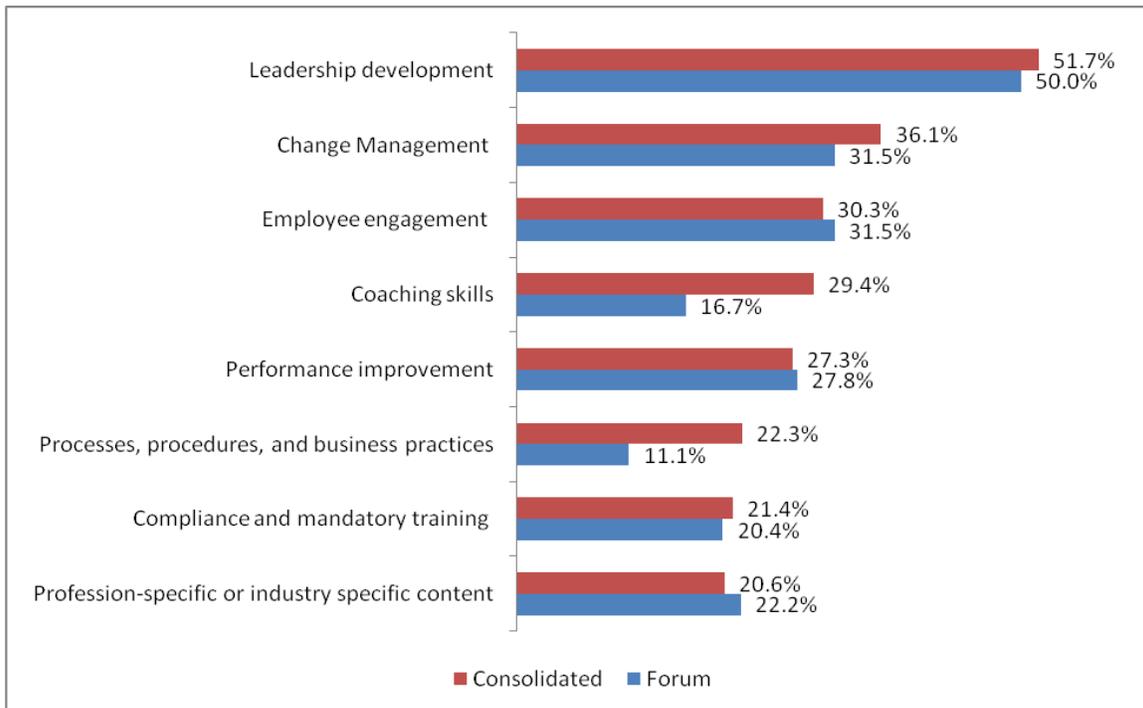
1. Please indicate the top five focus areas for your organization (team/ group/ division/ organization) in 2011 in terms of **content learning**.

- Over half of the sample (52%) indicated leadership development to be the main content focus in 2011. This was followed by just over a third of respondents indicating that change management (36%) would be a focus in 2011. Approximately three out of ten respondents indicated that employee engagement and coaching skills would be the focus of the upcoming year. Performance management was the fifth highest response with 27% stating it would be a focus area in 2011.
- Exactly half of ASTD Forum respondents indicated that leadership development was the focus for their organization in 2011. Similar to the consolidated group, change management, employee engagement, and performance management were also included in the Forum’s top five responses. Over a quarter of Forum members included career planning (26%).
- The consolidated group and the Forum respondents differed in the priority of some content areas. Large differences between the two groups were seen, where Forum members envisioned less focus on coaching skills; processes, procedures, and business practices; managerial training; customer service skills; supervisory training; and emotional intelligence than the consolidated

group. However, in 2011 Forum respondents planned to focus significantly more on career planning, learning about learning, and leaders as teachers' skills compared to the consolidated group.

- In comparison to 2010, leadership development and coaching skills remained as top focus areas for the consolidated group. The emphasis on change management and employee engagement increased in 2011; seeing them enter the top five response options. In 2011, profession-specific or industry specific content, and compliance and mandatory training were no longer in the top five responses, yet these responses saw similar response percentages.

Figure 1: Top Eight Content Focus Areas in 2010



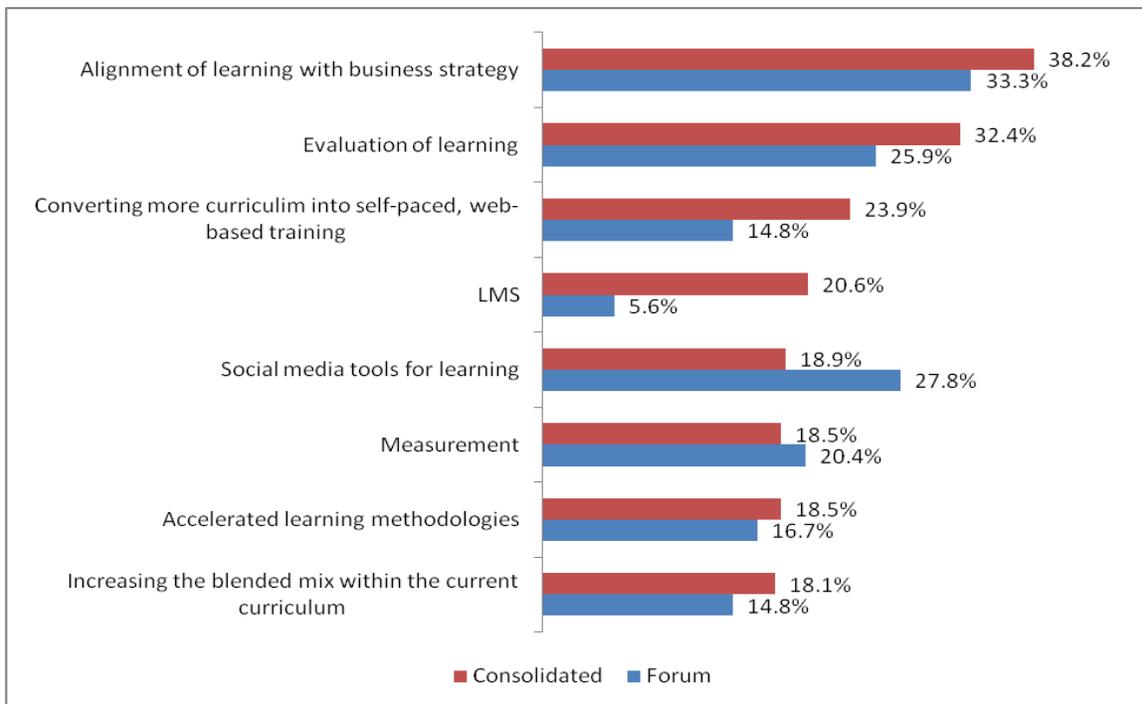
2. Please indicate your top five focus areas for your learning organization (team/ group/ division/ organization) in 2011 in terms of **effectiveness and efficiency of learning processes**.

- In terms of effectiveness and efficiency of learning processes, the top four areas of focus with more than one in five respondents, were alignment of learning with business strategy (38%), evaluation of learning (32%), converting more curriculum into self-paced, web-based training (24%), and, LMS (21%).
- The top focus areas for the group of Forum respondents differed from the consolidated group. Alignment of learning with business strategy remained the primary focus in 2011 for a third of Forum respondents. This was followed with social media tools for learning (28%), evaluation of learning (26%), measurement (21%), and social learning practices (20%).
- Some large differences in the percentage of responses between the consolidated group and Forum respondents were seen for a number of the response options. The group of Forum members had a higher number of responses for some response options in comparison to the

consolidated group, which include: social media tools for learning, social learning practices, experiential opportunities, learning about learning methods, role of the learning designers, and rationalizing curriculum.

- In 2011, the top two focus areas in terms of effectiveness and efficiency remained the same as 2010: alignment of learning with business strategy and evaluation of learning. Experiential opportunities saw approximately a 50% decrease for the consolidated group in 2011; moving out of the top five responses. Benchmarking other learning groups also saw roughly a 50% decrease in 2011. Social media for learning remained the same for the consolidated group, but saw a large increase for the Forum group. Using Web 2.0 methodologies saw decreases in 2011, while converting more curriculum into self-paced, web-based training, and LMS saw increases.

Figure 2: Top Eight Focus Areas for Effectiveness and Efficiency of Learning Processes in 2011

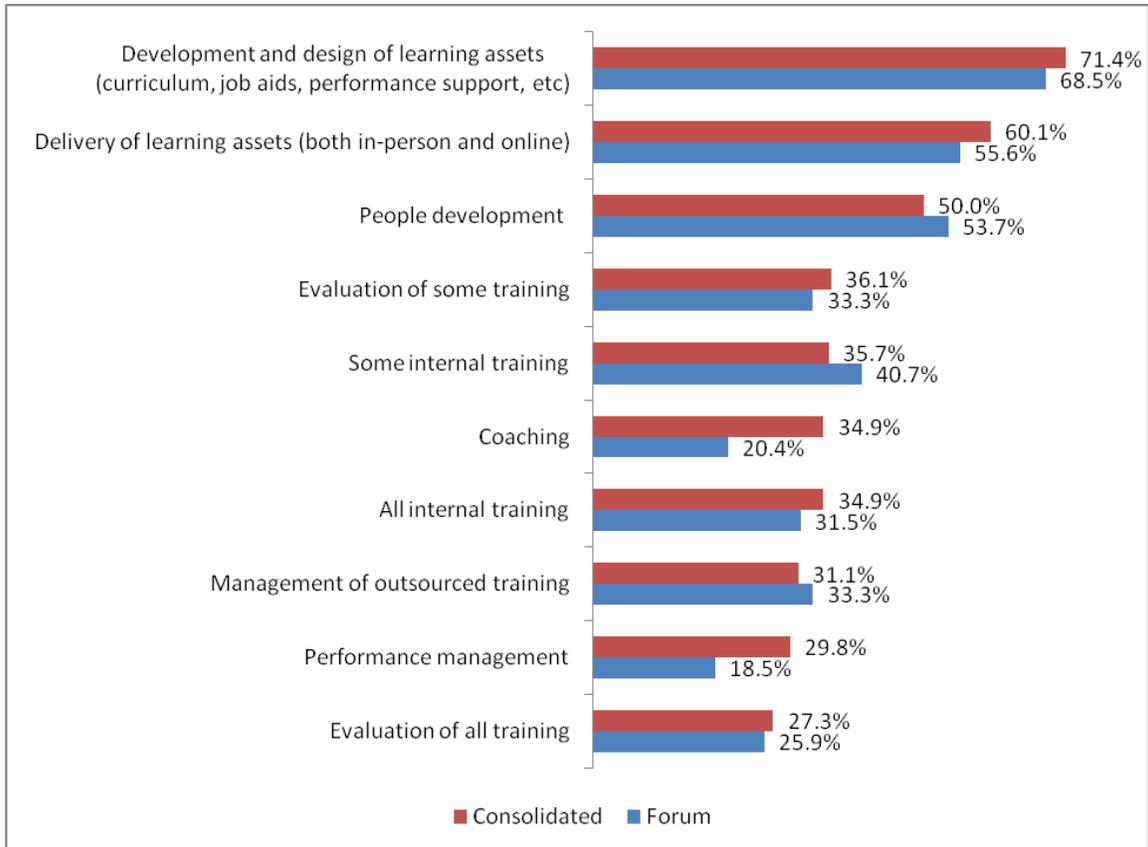


3. What is your learning function accountable to deliver? (Check all that apply.)

- Over half the sample indicated that the primary deliverables their learning functions were accountable for are the development and design of learning assets (71%), delivery of learning assets (both in person and online) (60%), and people development (50%). Over a third of respondents emphasized that their learning function was accountable to evaluation some training (36%), some internal training (36%), coaching (35%), and all internal training (35%).
- More than 50% of the Forum respondents indicated that their learning functions had the same top three deliverables in 2011: development and design of learning assets, delivery of learning assets, and people development. A significantly lower number of Forum respondents (20%) indicated that coaching was a deliverable for their learning function in comparison to the consolidated sample (35%).
- Development and design of learning assets and delivery of learning assets maintained their status of being the most important deliverables for learning function from 2010. However, some

changes were observed in a year-on-year comparison. Decreases were seen in a number of response options which include: some internal training, management of outsourced training, purchasing and implementing of commercial web-based training. Despite executive/leadership development being the most important focus area for organizations in 2011, there was a large decrease in the percentage of respondents who saw executive development experiences as being a key deliverable for their learning function, in comparison to 2010. Despite the consolidated group seeing decreases in executive development experiences in 2011, Forum respondents actually saw a slight increase.

Figure 3: Top Ten Learning Function Deliverables

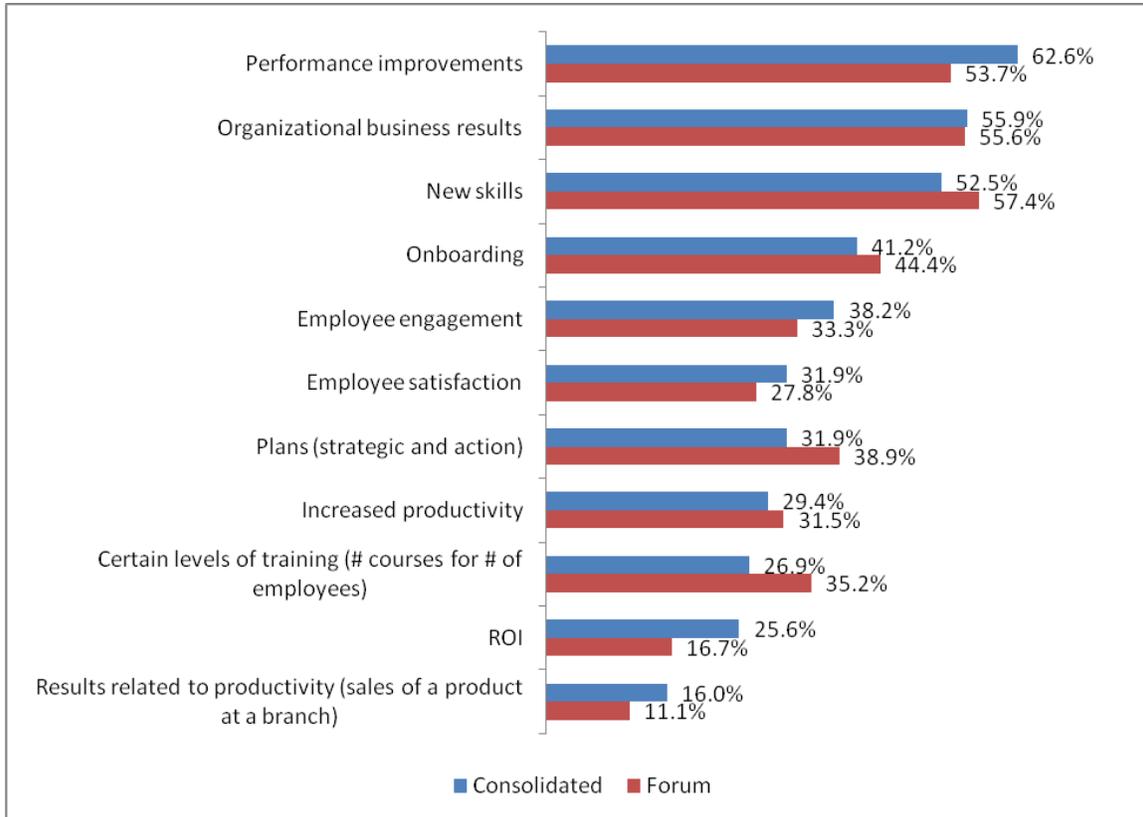


4. In order to be considered successful in 2011, what are the key outcomes your learning function must deliver for your company? (Check all that apply)

- Learning functions are responsible for a variety of key outcomes for their companies, the most important being performance improvements (63%) and organizational business results (56%). This was followed by new skills (53%) and onboarding (41%). This indicates that after the adverse impact of the economy over the past few years, companies are focusing on developing new talent and skills in 2011. Nearly four in ten respondents indicated that employee engagement was a deliverable, while just over 30% emphasized that employee satisfaction was a key deliverable.
- The Forum respondents had the same top three key outcomes; however, in the reverse order. New skills (57%) was the primary deliverable for Forum respondents, followed by organizational business results (56%), and performance improvements (54%).

- The Forum sample highlighted that new skills, plans (strategic and action), and certain levels of training were more important outcomes for their learning functions, than for the consolidated sample.
- Despite performance improvements remaining the top response to this question, in comparison to 2010, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who indicated that it was a key deliverable for their learning function. Employee engagement and employee satisfaction saw similar results compared to 2010. However, in 2011, there was a decrease in the percentage of respondents who saw increased productivity as a key deliverable for their learning function.

Figure 4: Key Outcomes the Learning Function Must Deliver



Methodology:

An online survey using Zoomerang survey software was fielded to three groups in January 2011: the ASTD Forum; LearnShare organizations, and a group of senior learning professionals associated with ASTD. The survey was completed by 54 ASTD Forum members, 172 senior learning professionals associated with ASTD, and 12 LearnShare organizations. Therefore, the sample size was 238.

About the ASTD Forum:

The ASTD Forum (Forum) is a segment of ASTD focused on building organizational capability to address the challenges of both today and the future. The Forum is a consortium of private and public sector organizations networked through a variety of connecting mechanisms to engage members in connecting, collaborating and sharing performance improvement processes and practices. These activities encourage members to leverage evidence-based research and experience from practitioners to jump-start business results. For more information about the ASTD Forum, please visit www.astd.org/forum

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Appendix:

Question 1: Please indicate the top five focus areas for your organization (team/ group/ division/ organization) in 2011 in terms of **content learning**.

Response	Consolidated	Forum
Leadership development	51.7%	50.0%
Change Management	36.1%	31.5%
Employee engagement	30.3%	31.5%
Coaching skills	29.4%	16.7%
Performance improvement	27.3%	27.8%
Processes, procedures, and business practices	22.3%	11.1%
Compliance and mandatory training	21.4%	20.4%
Profession-specific or industry specific content	20.6%	22.2%
Managerial training	20.2%	9.3%
Critical thinking skills - with problem-solving	19.3%	16.7%
Career Planning	16.4%	25.9%
Customer service skills	14.7%	7.4%
Informational technology skills	14.7%	11.1%
Sales training	12.6%	11.1%
Learning about learning	12.2%	20.4%
Product knowledge	11.3%	7.4%
Supervisory training	10.9%	5.6%
Project/program management	10.5%	7.4%
Moving into a global focus skills	10.1%	13.0%
Emotional intelligence	9.7%	3.7%
Mentoring skills	9.2%	5.6%
Interpersonal skills	8.8%	7.4%
Leaders as teachers' skills	8.8%	13.0%
Generational issues	8.4%	9.3%
Team decision-making	7.1%	5.6%
Personal assessments	5.0%	5.6%
Ethical decision making	1.3%	0.0%

Question 2: Please indicate your top five focus areas for your learning organization (team/ group/ division/ organization) in 2011 in terms of **effectiveness and efficiency of learning processes**.

Response	Consolidated	Forum
Alignment of learning with business strategy	38.2%	33.3%
Evaluation of learning	32.4%	25.9%
Converting more curriculum into self-paced, web-based training	23.9%	14.8%
LMS	20.6%	5.6%
Social media tools for learning	18.9%	27.8%
Accelerated learning methodologies	18.5%	16.7%
Measurement	18.5%	20.4%
Increasing the blended mix within the current curriculum	18.1%	14.8%
ROI for learning	17.2%	14.8%
Performance support	15.5%	11.1%
Knowledge management	15.1%	9.3%
Communities of practice	13.4%	16.7%
Partnering with business units	13.4%	13.0%
Assessment of learning practices	13.0%	11.1%
Informal learning practices	12.2%	14.8%
Learning 2.0	11.3%	14.8%
Benchmarking other learning groups	10.9%	11.1%
Social learning practices	10.9%	20.4%
Simulations	10.5%	7.4%
ADDIE and design of instruction (ISD, Kolb, etc)	10.1%	5.6%
Experiential opportunities (within the 70-20-10 framework)	10.1%	16.7%
Learning strategy	9.7%	11.1%
Moving into a global focus	9.7%	11.1%
Rapid design	9.7%	1.9%
Training/learning design skills	8.8%	5.6%
Self-paced stand alone training	8.4%	5.6%
Virtual facilitation	8.4%	9.3%
Using Web 2.0 methodologies	8.0%	9.3%
Scalability of curriculum	7.6%	7.4%
Learning about learning methods	6.7%	11.1%
Managing the learning function	6.7%	1.9%
Training plans	6.7%	1.9%
Gaming	6.3%	9.3%
Human-centered design	5.9%	7.4%
User collaboration for solutions	5.5%	3.7%

Virtual design	5.0%	5.6%
Role of the learning designers (from trainer to facilitator)	4.2%	9.3%
Training delivery skills	4.2%	3.7%
User-generated curriculum	3.4%	5.6%
Web 3.0	3.4%	3.7%
Rationalizing curriculum	2.5%	7.4%
Web 2.0	2.5%	3.7%
Rapid prototyping	2.1%	5.6%
Outsourcing in the training function	1.7%	1.9%
Reflective practices	1.7%	0.0%
Systems approach, e.g. an ecosystem	1.7%	3.7%
LCMS	1.3%	1.9%

Question 3: What is your learning function accountable to deliver? (Check all that apply.)

Responses	Consolidated	Forum
Development and design of learning assets (curriculum, job aids, performance support, etc)	71.4%	68.5%
Delivery of learning assets (both in-person and online)	60.1%	55.6%
People development	50.0%	53.7%
Evaluation of some training	36.1%	33.3%
Some internal training	35.7%	40.7%
All internal training	34.9%	31.5%
Coaching	34.9%	20.4%
Management of outsourced training	31.1%	33.3%
Performance management	29.8%	18.5%
Evaluation of all training	27.3%	25.9%
Development of technology and design for virtual connections	25.6%	24.1%
Executive development experiences	25.2%	35.2%
Talent management	22.7%	18.5%
Management of coaching	20.6%	18.5%
Assessment for outsourced training	19.3%	11.1%
Purchasing and implementation of commercial web-based training	18.1%	18.5%
Simulations	18.1%	18.5%
Succession planning	18.1%	18.5%
Internal social networking structures	7.1%	9.3%
Oversight of social media sites	5.9%	3.7%

Question 4: In order to be considered successful in 2011, what are the key outcomes your learning function must deliver for your company? (Check all that apply)

Responses	Consolidated	Forum
Performance improvements	62.6%	53.7%
Organizational business results	55.9%	55.6%
New skills	52.5%	57.4%
Onboarding	41.2%	44.4%
Employee engagement	38.2%	33.3%
Plans (strategic and action)	31.9%	38.9%
Employee satisfaction	31.9%	27.8%
Increased productivity	29.4%	31.5%
Certain levels of training (# courses for # of employees)	26.9%	35.2%
ROI	25.6%	16.7%
Results related to productivity (sales of a product at a branch)	16.0%	11.1%