BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN CONTENT AND EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

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With 73% of Best-in-Class companies having difficulty developing internal talent to competitively resolve emerging skills gaps, internal learning and employee development are clearly showing cracks in the foundation. In 2017, Industry Leaders and the Best-in-Class alike are finally recognizing that they need to move beyond 'in-the-moment' and siloed content development to focus on how best to train the entire organization.

Sixty-seven percent of Best-in-Class companies are dissatisfied with the quality of new hires after they have worked just 1-3 years for the organization.

Today's Best-in-Class companies are 27% more likely than All Others (95% vs. 75%) to be strategizing to improve labor productivity by developing the skills of the existing workforce. Driving this desire is the fact that 80% of Industry Leading organizations consider their inability to develop and train internal talent to meet operational goals to be a top pressure.

The Best-in-Class are 72% more likely than All Others (50% vs. 20%) to use a learning management system (LMS) to provide employees with access to training content and resources. The problem is that today's LMS has become little more than a disorganized content repository. Today's learning management systems consist of content that often lacks quality and that fails to drive employees to fulfill long-term organizational and career goals. Industry Leaders are 53% more likely than All Others (40% vs. 26%) to consider their LMS to be disorganized and failing to direct employees to relevant materials for career advancement or training.

The Best-in-Class are recognizing the need for higher quality learning management. For example, 33% of the Best-in-Class already employ adaptive analytics to drive internal content and resources to employees who are most likely to consume them based on skills, competencies, and goals analyses. While this is a good start, it only covers half the battle.

Today's Top Learning Challenges

Today's LMS resources face challenges in three major areas: Resource organization, optimization of content direction, and resource relevance.

Employees at 50% of Best-in-Class companies cannot follow or see the relevance of resources or content that form their training programs.

Figure 1: Top Challenges Facing Learning Management

Challenge	All Others	Best-in-Class
Inability to assess competencies and skills to identify gaps	39%	51%
Content is not relevant or well-understood	50%	47%
Learning does not link to business results	51%	37%
Resources do not respond to shifting business priorities	24%	33%
Management resists buying into learning	33%	18%
Participation is low	18%	16%
Content must be changed frequently	14%	10%

■ All Others ■ Best-in-Class
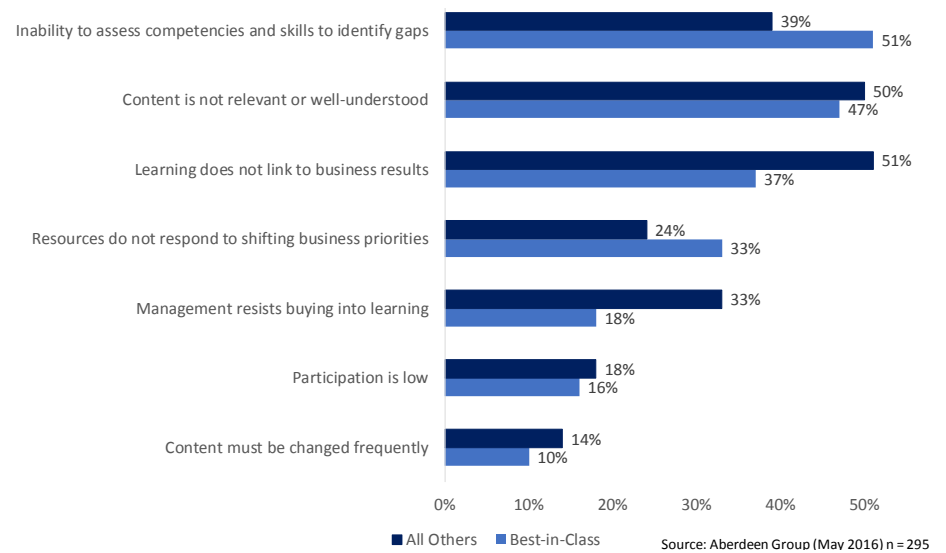
Source: Aberdeen Group (May 2016) n = 295

Figure 1 shows the top challenges facing the field of learning management today. At the top of the list, Best-in-Class companies are failing to design and implement relevant content rooted in competency analyses. In other words, the Best-in-Class are missing the mark on developing and promoting content that is relevant to employee goals and objectives. Training formats are also bulky to the point that employees at 50% of Best-in-Class companies cannot follow or see the relevance of resources or content that form their training programs.

Today, 54% of organizations use two or more learning management solutions, including 62% of Best-in-Class companies.

In Employee Wellness: Individualizing Productivity (January 2017), Aberdeen found that employers have been pushing toward a model of 'employee self-management' for nearly four decades. In Increasing the Value of Learning Management (April 2017), Aberdeen concluded that the self-management model has led to the gross neglect of learning management systems. As Figure 1 points out, low employee participation in learning management initiatives is not the culprit behind the failure of self-management.

Today, 54% of organizations use two or more learning management solutions, including 62% of Best-in-Class companies. The self-management model has pushed content and resource management to the departmental level, placing managers in charge of the acute differences in training requirements across different departments.

As new content gets developed, learning strategies are diverging even within organizations. The divergence is presenting an even more disorganized training effort that fails to sync with management goals and objectives. The results speak for themselves, as only 25% of Best-in-Class companies find that employee performance improvements are aligning with greater achievement of management goals and objectives.

Solving the Problem: Engaging a Subject Matter Expert

On average, Best-in-Class companies are 54% more likely than All Others (57% vs. 37%) to have a formal strategy in place for employee training and development. Furthermore, Best-in-Class companies are 15% more likely than All Others (45% vs. 39%) to find that learning management is vital to building a successful organization. While these are steps in the right direction, 77% of Best-in-Class companies still grapple with an inability to resolve skills gaps, and 50% of the Best-in-Class fail to promote relevant or meaningful development resources.

Among the Best-in-Class, social collaboration, mentoring, and group development are being implemented in the wake of lackluster performance in instructional, content-based training.

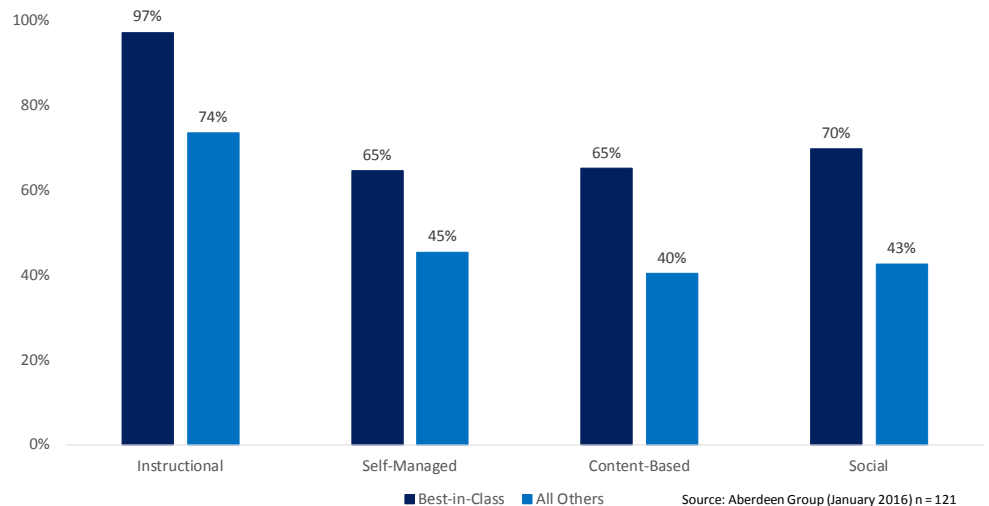**Figure 2: Top Methods for Learning and Development Delivery**

Source: Aberdeen Group (January 2016) n = 121

Today, Best-in-Class companies are 18% more likely than All Others to engage an SME in the design of their content-based and instructional learning.

Figure 2 shows the kinds of strategies in use by organizations today. Coming in first is instructional-based training that includes both live training sessions and pre-recorded instructional materials. Removing new-hire training from the instructional category, however, moves it into second place behind social learning amongst the Best-in-Class, and behind self-managed learning amongst All Others.

The data in Figure 2 points to diverging strategies between the Best-in-Class and All Others. Among the Best-in-Class, social collaboration, mentoring, and group development are being implemented in the wake of lackluster performance in instructional, content-based programming and self-managed training. Implementing social learning to back up instructional training has been a consistent Best-in-Class trend within Aberdeen's data across the last three years. As the Best-in-Class are still struggling with the skills gap and a lack of training consistency across departments, social learning is being received as a group version of self-management. Employees at 71% of Best-in-Class companies, however, want a stronger employer

A key to resolving departmental fragmentation of the learning infrastructure lies with engaging a subject-matter expert (SME) in the development of content and a content management hierarchy.

Best-in-Class companies using an SME partner for content development were **13%** more likely to see revenue per FTE increase by more than 10% in the last 12 months. They were also **73%** more likely to see a greater alignment of performance improvements with greater achievement of management goals and objectives in the last 12 months.

investment in training and development programs if the employer is to retain them. In other words, promoting another self-managed model amidst a fragmented and irrelevant instructional infrastructure is not going to improve training and development.

Instead, employers should be focusing on the data point in Figure 2 that they have ignored the most: Content-based training.

As noted earlier, the main roadblock to improving content-based training is the departmental fragmentation of the learning infrastructure. A key to resolving this lies with engaging a subject-matter expert (SME) in the development of content and a content management hierarchy. Today, Best-in-Class companies are 18% more likely than All Others (26% vs. 22%) to engage an SME in the design of their content-based and instructional learning.

SMEs build and manage content for a variety of different industries or markets. Their industry reach enables them to tap into an understanding of best practices within these industries, allowing them to construct a content hierarchy for the delivery of Best-in-Class content. Their own expertise also lets them customize content delivery down to the departmental level, without foregoing management goals and objectives. Furthermore, SMEs often come with their own technology that integrates with the existing LMS infrastructure, allowing HR to remain focused on training.

The results of an SME engagement speak for themselves: Today, Best-in-Class companies using an SME partner for content development were 13% more likely than those not using an SME content partner (36% vs. 32%) to see revenue per FTE increase by more than 10% in the last 12 months. Companies engaging a content SME partner were also 73% more likely than those not engaging one (26% vs. 15%) to see a greater alignment of performance improvements with greater achievement of management goals and objectives in the last 12 months.

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