

WE LEARN

Learning is Human

WHY HUMAN CONNECTION DRIVES
BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES





People Power Everything

Companies don't solve problems, serve customers, or innovate. People do. Your people are the ones dreaming up new ways to compete, taking ownership of challenges, working them through to the end. They make the organization real.

Yet most organizations aren't equipping their workforce to handle what's coming. Workers see the disruption clearly. According to Lighthouse Research, 51% are worried about the future of work due to AI, economic conditions, and other disruptions. For workers aged 18–28 — those with the longest careers ahead of them — that number jumps to 64%. (*Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025*)

They know it's on them to adapt. 73% of employees say they're mostly responsible for their own development. (*Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025*)

But knowing isn't the same as being equipped!

71% of workers want to learn from and connect with a human mentor or coach, yet only 16% feel they have the support and resources they need. (*Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025*).

The gap between expectation and support keeps widening. And the solution isn't more content. It's more connection.





What's Broken

When learning lacks strategic alignment, it defaults to transactional: deliver content, check completion, move on. Without a clear link to business outcomes, L&D becomes an 'order-taking' function. More courses. More content. No change. Sound familiar?

Training Industry recently asked L&D leaders what they'd do with more budget. 60% said they'd spend it on creating more training. Meanwhile, 57% of those same leaders said they lacked confidence in their learning plans or didn't have a plan at all. (Training Industry Pulse Survey 2025). IOW — more money flowing toward more content, with no strategy to guide it.

The result shows up in the employee experience. In recent analyst data, 21% say training content isn't relevant to their job. 24% say it only helps with their current role, not future skills. And 27% can't even find the training they need when they're looking for it. (*Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025*)



These aren't three separate problems. They're symptoms of the same one. When there's no strategy, content misses the mark. Questions about access — platforms, devices, pathways — get answered reactively instead of by design. Current training doesn't ladder to future skills. Strategy isn't just about what you build. It's about how people experience it.

Access goes beyond findability.

Generic content — whether bought off the shelf or generated by AI — lacks organizational context. It's technically available but not truly accessible. Content alone isn't the value L&D brings.

L&D exists to wrap learning in context. To connect content to application. To make knowledge specific to how your people need to use it — in their jobs, their industry, their organization. Without that, you have information. You don't have learning.



The Risk of Going Faster Without Going Deeper

In the rush toward AI-generated content and faster production cycles, organizations are introducing risks they may not see coming.

Companies invest in learning for three reasons: risk mitigation, skills development, and culture. Risk mitigation is often the biggest driver. But if humans aren't in the loop — reviewing content, understanding context, anticipating how learners will interpret guidance — you may create the very risk you're trying to prevent.



A leader at an insurance company's investment arm shared this story: They use AI to generate overnight market analysis for portfolio managers. The AI sees movement in the Hong Kong markets and recommends action. But what AI doesn't know is that the portfolio is already counterbalanced. Without human intervention to layer that context, someone could make a move that undermines the portfolio's purpose — which is to guarantee the company can pay claims when customers have their worst day.

The stakes are real. Transactional learning is a symptom. The root cause is disconnection — from strategy, from culture, from the humans you're trying to develop.



What Employees Actually Want

Workers aren't blind to what's changing. They feel it. Learners worried about AI reshaping their skills are 92% more likely to say the skills required for their job have already changed since they took the position. *(Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025)*

They want support and they want to be seen — not just for what they do now, but for their potential.



The Human Side of Learning

Workers know what helps them grow: other people. But most organizations haven't built systems to support that. Only 29% have technology to help them find a mentor, and 22% have no access to mentors at all. *(Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025)*

AI can fill some of the gap. Faster content, personalized pathways, always-on availability. Workers see the value: 44% say they'd use an AI coach because it's there when they need it. *(Lighthouse Learner Pulse Survey 2025)*

But AI can't understand your culture. It can't navigate organizational politics or build trust over time. It can generate technically accurate recommendations without knowing whether they fit your situation.

Workers aren't rejecting technology. They're asking for balance.

AI for efficiency. Humans for guidance, trust, and growth. 93% want opportunities to practice new skills in a safe space before using them on the job — and that kind of learning happens best with someone in their corner.

AI is a tool. Human connection is the strategy.



What Actually Works

Start With Humans, Not Content

Most organizations start with content, then try to force it into their culture. That's backwards.

A cohesive learning strategy starts with relationships, culture, and the actual humans who need to grow. Then you build learning that fits their world, not the other way around. This requires deep listening. Understanding what learners need to think, feel, and do. Understanding what the business needs to see change. Then designing for both.

Not everyone shows up to learning feeling capable or worthy. The democratization of learning means making it available to everyone, but we forget that technology, devices, and access still leave people off the path. Strategy has to account for these realities.

It also has to hold a tension: learner needs and business outcomes aren't the same thing, but they're not in opposition either. The job is designing for both.

We (at WeLearn!) recently talked with a chief compliance officer at a financial advisory firm who wanted to explore using podcasts — scripted, creative audio shows — to deliver compliance training to a thousand employees. Same regulatory requirements. Same outcomes. A completely different experience. He wasn't looking to check a box. He was looking to respect his learners while still meeting the business need.

Balance the Tension

Your client is the business, not the learner. That's the reality. But business mandates without learner engagement produce compliance theater. And learner satisfaction without business impact produces nothing measurable.

L&D's job is to hold both: serve the business through the learner. That starts with alignment — knowing what success looks like to your stakeholders before you build. Without that, no measurement framework will save you on the back end.

Success isn't 100% completion. It's not 96% satisfaction. It's not even 98% passing the quiz. Success is: what metric had to move as a result of this training? Did it move? How much?





The Organizations That Will Thrive

Human connection in learning isn't soft. It's how you protect the business while developing your people. It's how you create competitive advantage when everyone has access to the same information.

But connection doesn't happen through content alone. Learning sticks when it spreads — through peer conversations, manager reinforcement, systems that connect people to each other. The best initiatives create lasting connections between people, not just between people and programs.

That's what relationship-driven learning delivers: behavior change that sticks, reduced rework, culture that supports performance — and people who feel equipped for what's coming.

And when people feel equipped, their relationship to disruption changes. Learning acts as a buffer. Workers move from anxious to adaptable. From holding on to growing.

Content is abundant. Connection is scarce. The organizations that understand this will build learning that meets people where they are: strategically aligned, contextually relevant, and fundamentally human.

Learning is human. It always has been. The question is whether we'll build the systems — and the partnerships — that honor that truth.



Sources

Lighthouse Research & Advisory is an independent analyst firm focused on talent, learning, and HR. They produce practical, employer-validated research and help clients turn data into stories that resonate with the market. Their analyst team brings deep expertise and a global reach across the HR and learning community. [More on their site.](#)

✓ Learner Pulse Survey, November 2025
(surveyed ~700 workers)

✓ On-demand event “The Development Gap”
(survey data release)

Training Industry, Inc.,

✓ Pulse Survey, 2025



Authors



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Roberta is a HR Industry Go-to-market Leader and Lighthouse Research and Advisory Analyst.

She has been behind the scenes at market-leading companies to help them shift market narrative, influence buyer behavior and expand into new markets. She is known for her ability to turn strategic vision into measurable execution through positioning, storytelling, and operational rigor.

Since 2024, Roberta has been focused on industry research used by investors, corporates and vendors to assess technologies and inform M&A decisions, improve GTM, enable sales, inform product development, and develop thought leadership.

Nearly 20 years of experience in marketing, positioning, and strategy, with 10+ years of that being directly related to talent and the workforce.

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Sean is the Founder, CLO, and CEO of WeLearn, a learning solutions company dedicated to elevating individuals and organizations through human-centered workforce education.

Sean's career spans corporate learning, workforce development, and strategic consulting. He started at IBM Learning Services, then moved into leadership at a global education consulting firm, where he led award-winning training programs. He has worked with global organizations to design impactful learning strategies that drive business results.

Driven by a passion for connection and engagement, he launched WeLearn to redefine corporate learning with modern solutions. A trusted thought partner, Sean helps organizations implement learning strategies that support business transformation. He collaborates with clients on content development standards, AI adoption, and L&D governance.

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WE LEARN

We believe learning is human
and we build it that way.

WeLearn is a learning services, consulting, and custom content partner. We work alongside you to create solutions grounded in strategy, shaped by culture, and designed for real behavior change.

Based in Chicago, WeLearn serves global corporations including Fortune 500 companies.
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