



THE FUTURE OF LEARNING AT WORK

A VALOIR REPORT
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Employee experience has gained the attention of senior executives as they look to HR to help them attract and retain talent in a challenging and unpredictable market. The Valoir 2022 Employee Experience Survey found that career development is a key area where employees evaluate prospective employers – but that many organizations have yet to adopt technologies and strategies that support the ways employees learn best. Investments in technology-enabled mentoring and coaching, individualized learning in the stream of work, and broadening professional education can help differentiate a company’s overall career development strategy – and its employee experience.

The past two years have brought increased attention to and investment in employee experience. Recent staffing challenges and tightening of the labor market have driven organizations to rethink employee experience and engagement strategies based on a number of factors including:

- The move to hybrid and remote work. Remote work immediately reduced the opportunities for in-person connection and training, and many organizations are still struggling to operationalize new hybrid models. Still others are facing resistance to “back-to-office” initiatives. All are seeking means to increase the connection and engagement with employees. Leaders are recognizing that old training models are broken, and that coaching and mentoring for all employees – not just those on a management track – should be a key part of professional development.
- The recognition of the need to operationalize efforts for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Human resources (HR) and business leaders have recognized that the need to promote more diverse leadership begins with more grassroots efforts to not just recruit but retain and develop diverse talent at all levels of the organization.
- The great resignation. As employees re-evaluate their relationships with their employers, factors such as career development and DEI are becoming more important in the employer selection process.

These trends are causing employers to reexamine all facets of the employee experience, and learning and professional development are areas that are ripe for digital transformation. Valoir’s 2021 *State of Digital Transformation* report found that HR has been significantly slower in advancing digital transformation than other parts of the company (such as sales, marketing, and IT), with training and learning surfacing as a key area where companies have been slow to adopt new technologies. This is true for several reasons, but HR leaders recognize

that developing talent is more important than ever, and innovators are looking to technology to help them do so.

To better understand the current training and development landscape and employees' perception of the value of career development, Valoir's 2022 Employee Experience Survey assessed perceptions of more than 1000 employees in North America and Europe. The data was further validated through in-depth interviews with HR and business leaders tasked with managing and refining their talent development strategies to be competitive in the evolving labor marketplace.

Key findings

Key findings from our analysis include:

- Career advancement opportunities are second only to salary in choosing an employer. Opportunities for career advancement were a top reason to choose an employer (after salary). Workers ranked career advancement as number two across all age groups, except those 65 and over (where enjoying collaborating with co-workers was slightly more important than career advancement) and 18 to 24 (where a company's reputation for DEI rated slightly higher than career advancement).
- Old training models are insufficient. Employees rank mentoring and coaching as the number one way they learn at work. However, only slightly more than 1 in 10 employees would give their company an "A" grade for supporting mentoring and coaching. More than one in three workers said their employer provided no training that helped them advance their career, and only 15 percent of workers would give their employer an "A" grade for such training.
- Training in soft skills is limited. Only half of employees said their company provided any training around soft skills (such as communication, negotiation, or flexibility), and fewer than 1 in 10 gave their employer an "A" grade for soft skills assessments and training.
- Investments in technology innovation in areas such as coaching and mentoring and training can enable organizations to extend career development and meaningful learning opportunities beyond the select group of middle and upper-level management to whom coaching and other individualized education have historically been limited.
- HR leaders recognize that providing training and professional development opportunities beyond traditional means is key to engaging and retaining talent and advancing DEI at all levels of the organization.
- Companies have been slow to adopt technology to support new training and professional development areas, with only roughly

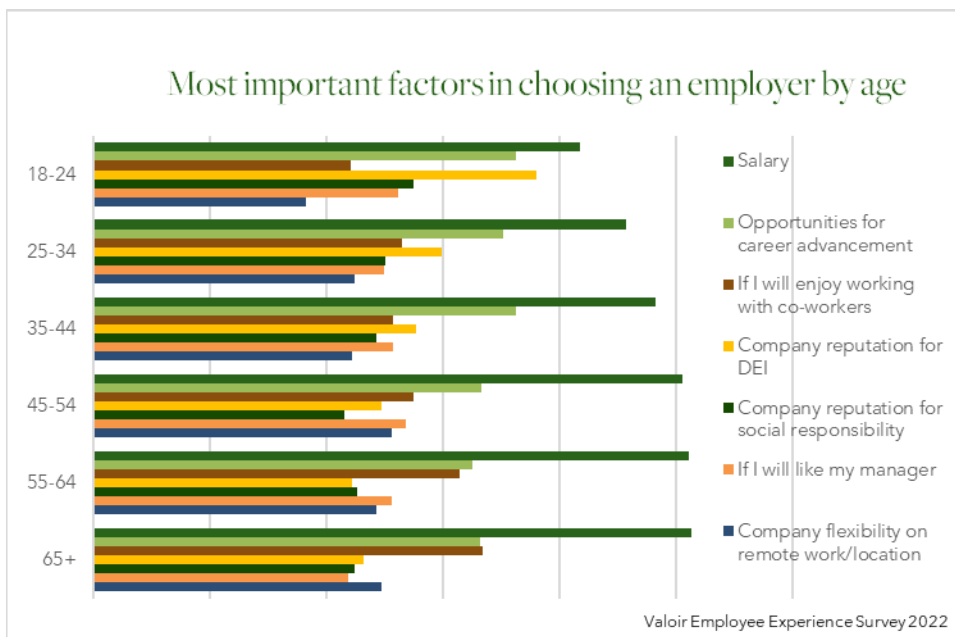


More than one in three workers said their employer provided no training that helped them advance their career.

half of all organizations using technology to support mentoring and coaching and soft skill development – and even fewer using technology to support assessment of leadership potential.

Training and employee experience

Although training and professional development is only one facet of the overall employee experience, we found employees rate it as a key factor when evaluating an employer’s potential. Valoir’s 2022 Employee Experience Survey found that opportunities for career development were a top factor (behind salary) why employees choose an employer. Only two age groups, 18 to 24 and those 65 and older, didn’t rate it as the number two factor in evaluating prospective employers, and they both rated it a close third.



For the 18-24 cohort, a company’s reputation for DEI was slightly more important than opportunities for career advancement. However, the same group perceived equal access to training and professional development as a key component of DEI efforts.

For the 65 and older cohort, career advancement still ranked highly but was edged out by whether an employee would enjoy working with their co-workers.

Valoir did not find a significant difference between genders in prioritizing the factors when selecting an employer.

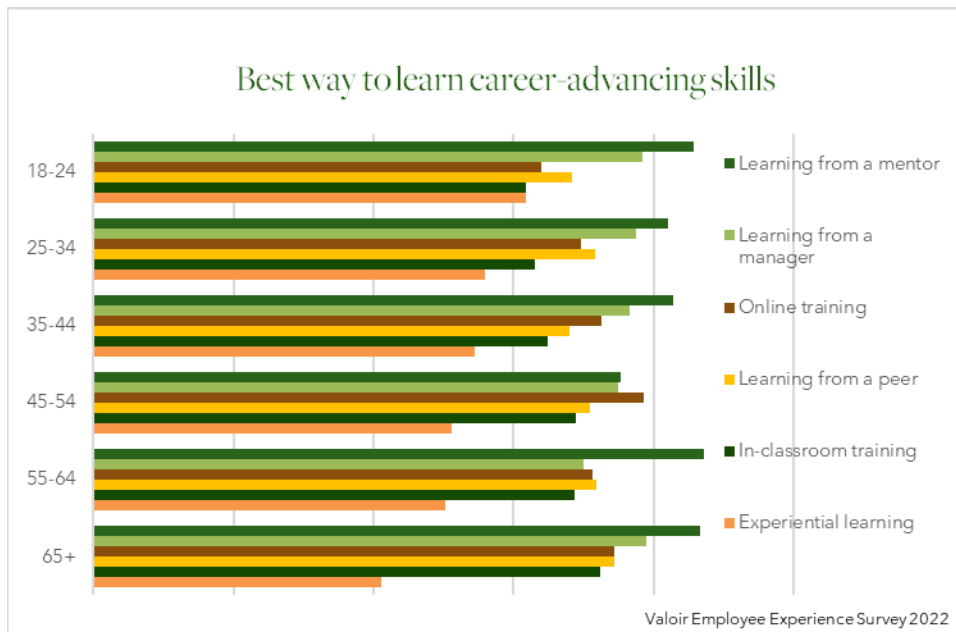
How employees learn best

Traditionally, HR has managed professional development and training that falls into a few broad categories:

- One-size-fits-all training delivered in the classroom or online and tracked by a learning management system (LMS).
- Specialized training for specific roles or departments, such as standard operating procedure or sales enablement training.
- Continuing education provided by an outside organization or university and funded in part or in whole by the employer for a select group of employees (typically high-performing individuals).
- One-on-one coaching or mentoring for managers and executives.

Classroom and online training are the most prevalent types of training for all employees. However, they are by their nature not tailored to the needs of the individual learner, and Valoir found that employees across all age groups rated in-classroom training as one of the least effective ways to learn career-advancing skills.

We found that across all age cohorts and genders, learning from mentors was the way most employees said they learned best, with only the 45 to 54 age group ranking another learning opportunity as better than mentoring. Workers ranked experiential learning consistently lowest across all age groups.

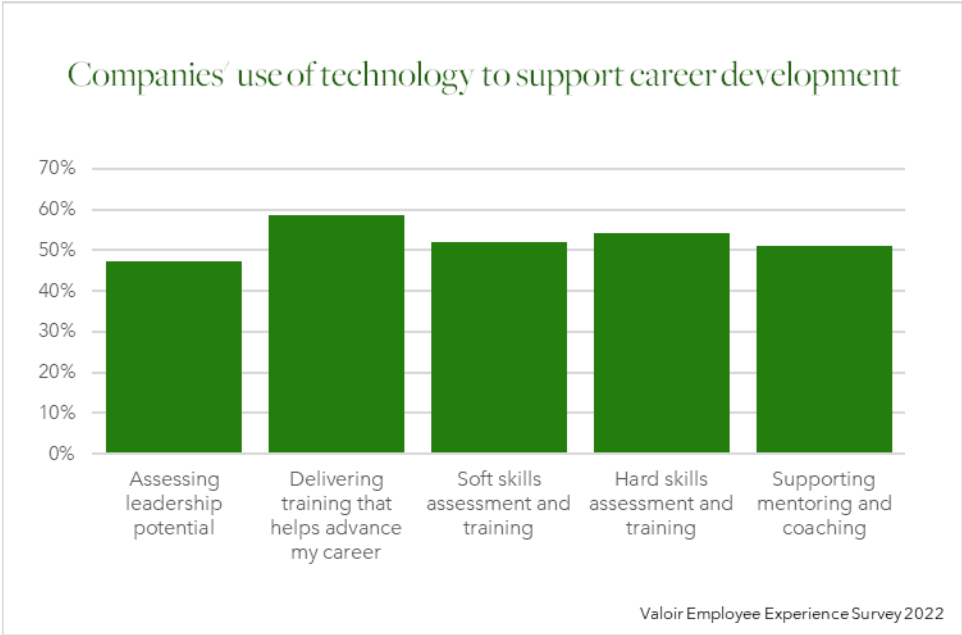


This highlights a large gap in many organizations' training strategies today that only provide coaching and mentoring programs for certain cohorts such as new employees, high-performing individuals, or those in

the succession plan. The data shows that mentor relationships at all levels – and ages – can be beneficial to career advancement. It also highlights the value of peer-to-peer mentoring and learning that often happens on an unstructured basis today – and has, in many cases, been disrupted by the move to remote and hybrid work. Looking to technologies that help to scale and operationalize mentoring and peer-to-peer learning can help HR professionals untap potential learning opportunities for employees that workers perceive as highly valuable.

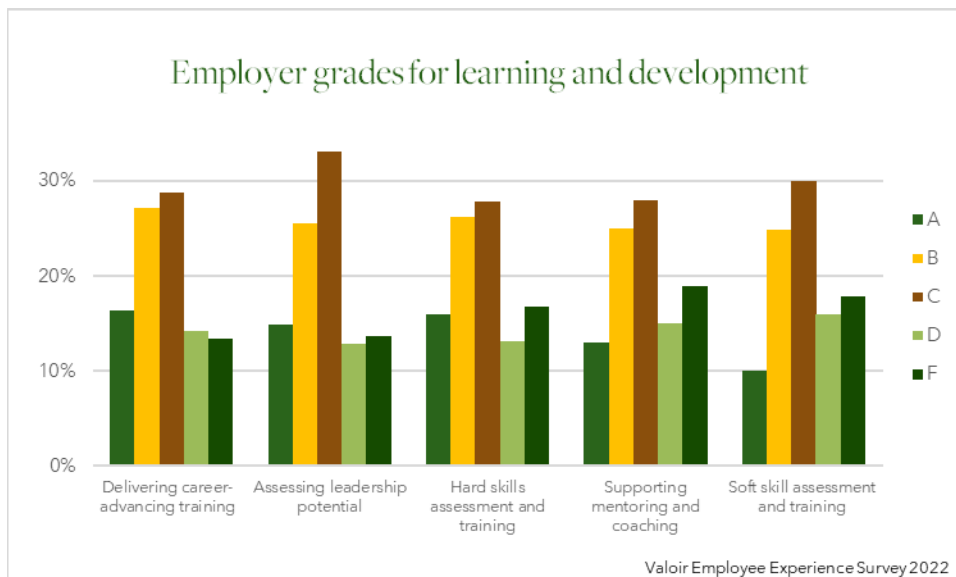
Technology to enable training and development

Valoir found that the use of technology to support career development varied across industries and company size, but that fewer than 60 percent of employees believed that their company had technology that delivered training to help advance their careers. Only half of the employees surveyed said their companies had any technology to support mentoring and coaching, and even fewer said their employer had leveraged technology to help assess leadership potential.



Delivering on training and development

Workers and HR leaders recognize that there is an opportunity to leverage technology to deliver better training and career development.



When Valoir asked employees to grade employers’ effectiveness in key areas such as career-advancing training, supporting training and mentoring, and soft and hard skills assessments and training, we found that fewer than 20 percent of employees would give their employer an “A” grade for these key areas of professional development, and almost an equal percentage of employees would give their employer a failing grade (There was not a significant difference in responses between age groups and genders).

Looking ahead

As companies rethink their employee experience strategies for a new and evolving work environment, opportunities for career development can be an important differentiator for potential employers. At the same time, the development of technologies to support a more individualized and employee-pull approach to training can drive a more effective and engaged workforce. Key technologies and strategies for a modern and differentiated professional development approach include:

- Extending opportunities for mentoring and coaching to all employees seeking it. Modern coaching and mentoring applications can connect employees with internal and external mentors and coaches and track progress, identify internal peer-to-peer and other mentoring opportunities, and provide a broad set of employees with access to mentor-led learning.
- Providing more employee pull-based learning opportunities in the stream of work. Through microlearning, in-application training, and other new channels, HR can increase individual effectiveness and productivity without disrupting the stream of work, enabling employees to learn when and where they choose and increasing knowledge retention compared with traditional methods.

- Broadening the continuing education opportunity. Beyond just certifications and degree programs for select groups of employees, HR can leverage the growth in online and in-person courses and programs from accredited institutions to offer professional development opportunities to employees at every level of the organization. Both workers and HR leaders said such programs can deliver not just a more qualified workforce but greater career advancement opportunities for underrepresented groups while increasing retention.

As employee experience gains the attention of executives beyond the HR department, HR leaders need to separate the hype from the reality when it comes to tools and technologies to improve employee experience. Given the importance of career advancement in employees' overall evaluation of potential employee experience, training and learning is a key area for investment. Moving away from traditional HR-push training and one-size-fits-all models and taking advantage of technologies that enable more personalized training, in ways that employees learn best, can drive a more effective, efficient, and engaged workforce.

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