



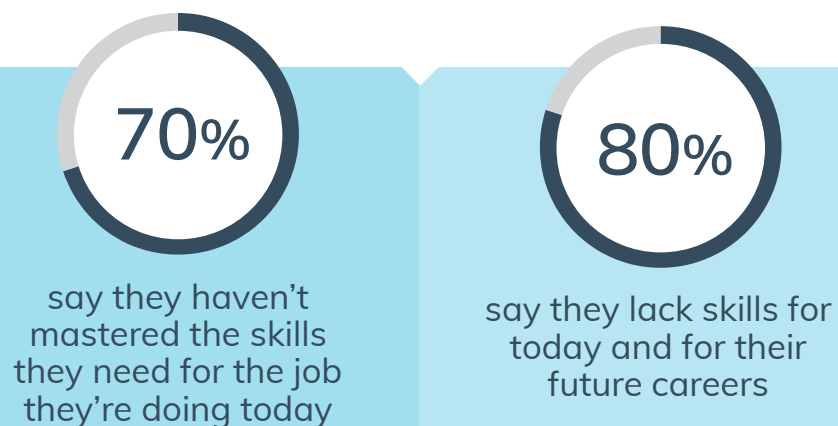
# The Definitive Guide to Upskilling

Your staff members who graduated 10, 15, 20, or more years ago are obviously prime targets for efforts to ensure they have the up-to-date knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their jobs efficiently and effectively.

### **But what about those hired five, two, or even less than one year ago?**

The potentially surprising truth is that, in this fast-paced global business environment, even recent graduates are likely to need upskilling to help ensure that they can hit the ground running and maintain their competitive edge.

Gartner recently put the question of how well-prepared workers feel they are to the test: In their 2018 Shifting Skills Survey<sup>1</sup>, they asked more than 7,000 employees to self-assess their proficiency levels. The results:



Employees are feeling the pinch. They know they lack the right skills and knowledge to be at full effectiveness. Increasingly, they value employers that are committed to helping them keep their skills and knowledge up to date. Employers that can't or won't do this are at risk of declining employee engagement, diminished loyalty, and increased turnover.

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<sup>1</sup> Gartner, 2018 Shifting Skills Survey, 2018

# Employees Value Training Opportunities, and So Should Employers

**According to Gallup, development is a key factor in retaining employees — especially millennials.** In their *How Millennials Want to Work and Live* report<sup>2</sup>, they say 59% of this demographic feel that opportunities to learn and grow are important to them, compared to 44% of Gen Xers and 41% of baby boomers. *Training Magazine* also reports that “training is the most important learning opportunity for job satisfaction, coming in above mentorship, a tuition reimbursement program, sabbaticals and international fellowships,” according to a Bridge by Instructure survey.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, there's a lot at stake for companies that fail to invest appropriately in upskilling. Data from The Work Institute estimates that the cost of losing an employee in the U.S. is \$15,000, conservatively.<sup>4</sup> This is an especially costly proposition when you consider that the average tenure of a top candidate is only 1.2 years, and the average payback period for an external hire is 2.2. years.<sup>5</sup>

But, there's also a lot to gain from an effective upskilling program. According to PwC, for every \$1 spent on upskilling, businesses typically earn or save \$2.<sup>6</sup>

GO1 defines the term “upskilling” as the development of additional skills to help make an employee more valuable in their current role and open them up to career advancement. Given how rapidly evolving workplaces require additional training, plus the extent to which employees value training opportunities, upskilling has become critically important to every business.

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<sup>2</sup> Gallup, *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Jeff Weber, “What Do Your Employees Value Most? Training,” *Training Magazine*

<sup>4</sup> The Work Institute, *2019 Retention Report: Trends, Reasons, & A Call to Action*

<sup>5</sup> Aberdeen Group, cited in *Enterprise E-Learning Trends 2020*, Docebo, 2020

<sup>6</sup> PwC, “Upskilling for competitiveness and employability”



# 4 Essential Upskilling Strategies

Traditionally, employee training has been accomplished through a mix of instructor-led courses, attendance at seminars and conferences, or through webinars and online training opportunities. That is changing, though. While these methods are still used, over the past five to 10 years, traditional training strategies have been changing, fueled by advances in technology as well as a more global and remote workforce. According to LinkedIn's 2019 Workplace Learning Report: "As L&D budgets grow, dollars continue to shift from instructor-led training (ILT) to online learning solutions."<sup>7</sup>

This shift toward online learning has facilitated more personalized training that addresses individual learner needs and preferences. Employers — and their employees — can choose from a balance of synchronous and asynchronous training options that can accommodate busy schedules and real-time learning needs and provide feedback in real time, as employees take online assessments that can be embedded in their training.

For today's L&D departments, Business.com<sup>8</sup> recently highlighted some emerging types of training and trends that employers should be aware of and consider for their teams. These include micro-learning, virtual reality, and simulations.

Other emerging trends including gamification; augmented reality to deliver location-specific information overlays via smartphones; and adaptive learning, which leverages AI to assess what a learner already knows and adjusts training accordingly.<sup>9</sup>

With so many options to choose from, it can seem overwhelming for organizations and their CLOs as they try to determine which types of training would be most effective — and most preferred — by employees in various situations. The four strategies below are important first steps to building and refining your upskilling program.

## EMERGING TRAINING TRENDS

### MICRO-LEARNING



As the term suggests, this involves delivering short bursts of information over time and via different learning platforms. Employees can partake of the learning opportunities wherever they may be and whenever it may be most convenient for them.

### VIRTUAL REALITY



Virtual reality offers the ability to immerse employees in simulations of real-life situations that are difficult, if not impossible, to effectively and safely train for in other settings. Firefighters, for instance, can use virtual reality training to practice responses to various types of fires they may encounter.

### SIMULATIONS



Simulations involve groups of employees learning together as they participate in experiences they are likely to face on the job.

<sup>7</sup> LinkedIn, *2019 Workplace Learning Report*

<sup>8</sup> Ulrich Boser, "The Biggest Trends in Employee Training," Business.com, March 5, 2020

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## 4 ESSENTIAL UPSKILLING STRATEGIES

# #1 Ensure Alignment to Corporate Strategy

It's important for both employers and employees to ensure alignment between upskilling strategies and overall corporate strategy. As Ross Tartell, Ph.D., adjunct associate professor of psychology at Columbia University, writes in *Training Magazine*<sup>10</sup>, training success is boosted when learning is linked to business performance. "It turns out that if people have a clear line of sight from what they learn to how it can improve their performance — and a clear understanding of how their performance impacts the organization's performance — they learn better and transfer that learning back to the job," he says.

**CLOs can take steps to ensure this alignment by:**

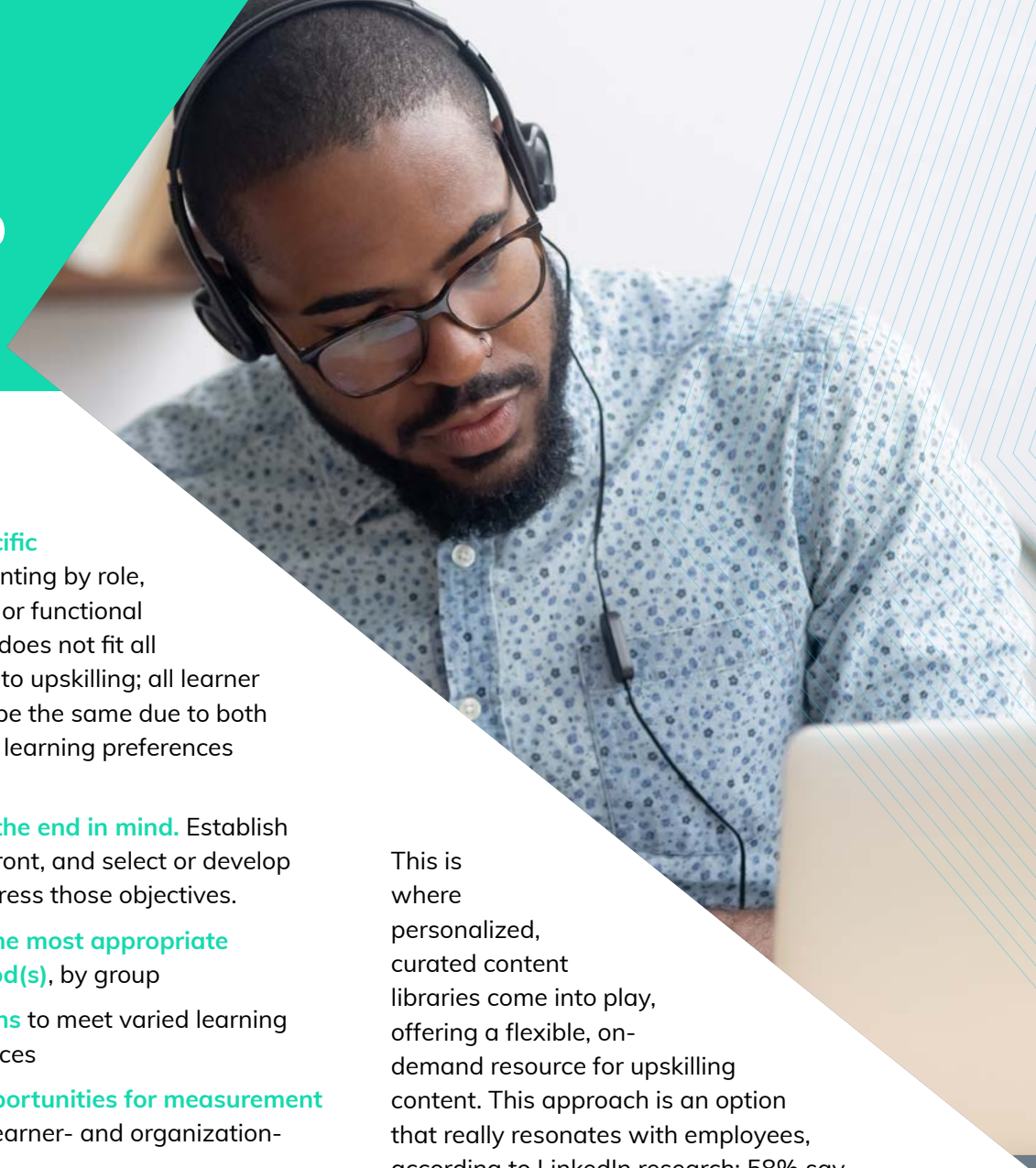
- **Becoming or staying familiar with the organization's strategic plan** — or, better yet, becoming an active participant in the strategic planning process
- **Based on the plan and identified outcomes**, determining employees' current levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities

(KSAs) and identify gaps

- **Targeting specific groups**, segmenting by role, operating unit, or functional area. One size does not fit all when it comes to upskilling; all learner needs will not be the same due to both their individual learning preferences and their roles.
- **Starting with the end in mind**. Establish objectives up front, and select or develop training to address those objectives.
- **Determining the most appropriate delivery method(s)**, by group
- **Offering options** to meet varied learning needs/preferences
- **Building in opportunities for measurement** that are both learner- and organization-focused

The idea of offering personalized training based on organizational unit or individual roles may seem daunting.

This is where personalized, curated content libraries come into play, offering a flexible, on-demand resource for upskilling content. This approach is an option that really resonates with employees, according to LinkedIn research: 58% say they prefer to learn at their own pace; 49% prefer to learn at the point of need.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Ross Tartell, "Aligning Training with Business Strategy," *Training Magazine*

<sup>11</sup> LinkedIn, *2018 Workplace Learning Report*

## 4 ESSENTIAL UPSKILLING STRATEGIES

## #2 Use Curated Content Libraries

The internet and the widespread availability of digital content make it possible and, increasingly, cost-effective to personalize the learning experience. Providing employees with access to a robust content library makes training convenient, and also makes it possible to customize training to individual employee needs and preferences. That can be a big boon for upskilling, as personalized training improves engagement because employees can “serve themselves” based on interests and need.

In addition, curated content libraries mean that employees have access to relevant training and information when and where they need it — making training in real time a reality. Josh Bersin refers to this type of training as “learning in the flow of work”<sup>12</sup> — the ability for employees to readily access the information they need as they perform their jobs, whenever they need it and in whatever platform they’re using.

Content libraries offer maximum convenience and a broad breadth of content coverage that can meet a wide array of learner needs. One question that often comes up related to training and upskilling of any kind, of course, is whether to create or commission custom-training solutions or leverage off-the-shelf training.

### HERE ARE SOME STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO LEVERAGE CURATED CONTENT LIBRARIES FOR UPSKILLING:

- **AUDIT EXISTING CHANNELS.** Identify the various learning channels that are currently available for upskilling. This may include coaching, on-the-job learning and e-learning. What do you have? What do you need? Importantly, make sure you’re ensuring flexibility to accommodate varying learning preferences.
- **IDENTIFY GAPS.** Consider what might be limiting your ability to deliver personalized training through curated content libraries: Is it technology? Content? Channels? Budget/resources?
- **FOCUS ON THE USER EXPERIENCE.** Encourage users to participate in development and process improvements, and encourage their ongoing input in terms of what’s working well for them and where improvements might be made.
- **SEGMENT YOUR OVERALL CONTENT RESOURCES.** Create libraries targeting specific demographics, work areas, or roles.
- **RUN A PILOT FIRST.** This allows you to gather information that can be used to make improvements as your content libraries are rolled out more broadly.
- **IDENTIFY METRICS.** To measure whether your upskilling efforts are achieving the desired results, start by looking at access and consumption metrics — but don’t overlook the need to monitor measures that are focused on the transfer of learning back to the job and on overall organizational impact.

<sup>12</sup> Josh Bersin, “A New Paradigm For Corporate Training: Learning In The Flow of Work,” June 3, 2018



## 4 ESSENTIAL UPSKILLING STRATEGIES

# #3 Consider Your Options for Sourcing Upskilling Content

It's a question that CLOs, training and development professionals, managers, and supervisors will have at one point or another: Should we develop our own custom upskilling solutions or use off-the-shelf training available through other sources? The answer is likely to be both, depending on the use case and desired outcomes. There are advantages and disadvantages to each.

The greatest advantage of custom training, of course, is that it is designed specifically to meet the unique needs of a specific organization, department, or individual. The greatest downside, and it's a big one, is cost in terms of both time and money.

Off-the-shelf training, on the other hand, has the big advantage of being less costly. Another advantage is that the training can be developed by subject matter experts, ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and timeliness of the information.

A hybrid approach to sourcing content is likely to yield optimal results. Custom training can be augmented or built on a foundation of off-the-shelf training, while off-the-shelf training can be modified or enhanced with specific points to address unique company and learner needs.

In either case, it's critical that your content provider can partner with you to create the most appropriate blend of custom and off-the-shelf training. This should be table stakes as you consider your vendor options.



## 4 ESSENTIAL UPSKILLING STRATEGIES

# #4 Apply Upskilling Best Practices

Upskilling is an ongoing must-do for CLOs and their L&D teams. To ensure maximum effectiveness and engagement for these efforts:

- **KISS: Keep it short and simple.**

Complicated isn't better. Make sure your training options are frictionless to access and laser-focused on need-to-know information.

- **Don't just educate, incorporate hands-on experiences into your training offers.** Staff will forget what they've learned if they don't have the opportunity to apply that learning. Your upskilling program should include a balanced mix of education and active, applied learning so that employees can truly absorb their new knowledge by actually using it.

- **Don't just focus on training for specific roles.** Also offer training of a more general nature that is still important and relevant for staff — for instance, stress management, mindfulness, preventing burnout, etc. Consider employees' needs for technical and soft skills, as well as their wellbeing.







## Make Upskilling Part of Your Learning Culture

Training in the 21st century isn't an event, it's a process — one that is ongoing and, increasingly, personalized to the individual needs of those being trained. Creating an effective upskilling program with personalized content and hands-on training, and that aligns with your organization's goals, is a fundamental part of that process.

Learn how GO1 can help you upskill your upskilling program with content that builds engagement, productivity, and loyalty in your team. Visit [go1.com](https://go1.com) to schedule a demo or contact us for more information.

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