

The L&D Playbook for Enabling Busy Managers

Engage | Act | Improve



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The Emerging Stronger team have never been afraid to tackle the big challenges that L&D face in our continually changing and fascinating workplaces.

Helping L&D take smart bold action that delivers better business results is what we do. We are passionate about applying evidence based thinking to create practical tools and solutions to the challenges and opportunities that could make or break us.

So when faced with the question of how do we enable busy managers to make time for learning and support their people to grow, improve and perform, we saw it as an opportunity to help L&D to tackle this challenge head on. We've created a set of plays to support you to experiment with new ideas, break new ground and explore smart partnerships with managers.

Here we've crafted 9 plays based on evidence-informed principles to help you:

- Engage: engage managers with learning through work around a common agenda
- Act: equip managers to take team initiatives to support growth
- Improve: encourage managers with continuous improvement

Be Bold,
Shannon, Laura and Michelle



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This tool works best when used in conjunction with the other tools in this series

1. Needs Analysis Tool
2. Curation Decision Tool
3. Communication Plan Launch Tool
4. Cultivating Learning in Workplace Communities
- 5. L&D Playbook for Enabling Busy Managers**
6. The Power Hour Tool
7. Improving Impact Tool
8. Team Skills Mapping Tool
9. L&D Skills Prioritiser Tool
10. Change Journey Planner



Working smarter with managers

Today's business leaders and managers are challenged by a shortage of skill and capability within their teams. This is holding them back from great performance today and stops them from being ready for new ways of working tomorrow.

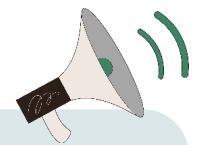
L&D are responding to the skills challenge by increasing their use of digital content libraries to support hybrid working and upskilling¹.

What's more, those L&D teams with a measurement strategy report² that digital learning has reduced time to achieve the same standards and individuals take less time to become capable in their role.

Managers and L&D share a common goal - both want to ensure teams and individuals are ready for the future of work. The evidence behind the need for better teamwork between managers and people professionals in building a shared culture that enables growth is stacking up:

- 25 years ago, Peter Senge talked about the vital role of team learning in building a smarter learning organisation.
- Workers today say that their managers play a vital role in influencing how they learn at work³ and yet, 1 in 5 (22%) workers said their managers do not encourage or enable learning at all, and just 17% said their managers help create a plan or set goals for developing skills.
- Over the last 20 years, evidence has shown that when managers and L&D work smarter together, better business results are achieved.

Despite an increase in 'any time, any place' digital learning opportunities and the common goals that L&D and business managers share, there is resistance. 42% of L&D professionals believe they are held back by manager's reluctance to make time for learning and 35% believe that they are constrained by the traditional expectations that business leaders have about L&D⁵.



It's time for L&D and managers to change the dynamic and work smarter together!



The L&D playbook for enabling busy managers

This L&D playbook harnesses the evidence from high performing learning teams and converts it into a series of 'plays' to help L&D leaders challenge the status quo by working smarter with managers.

The goal of these plays is to help you enable busy line managers to play their part in helping their teams to grow, adapt and change.

These plays work because they:

Are short and sharp

Essential for busy managers and L&D leads

Prioritise everyone's common agenda

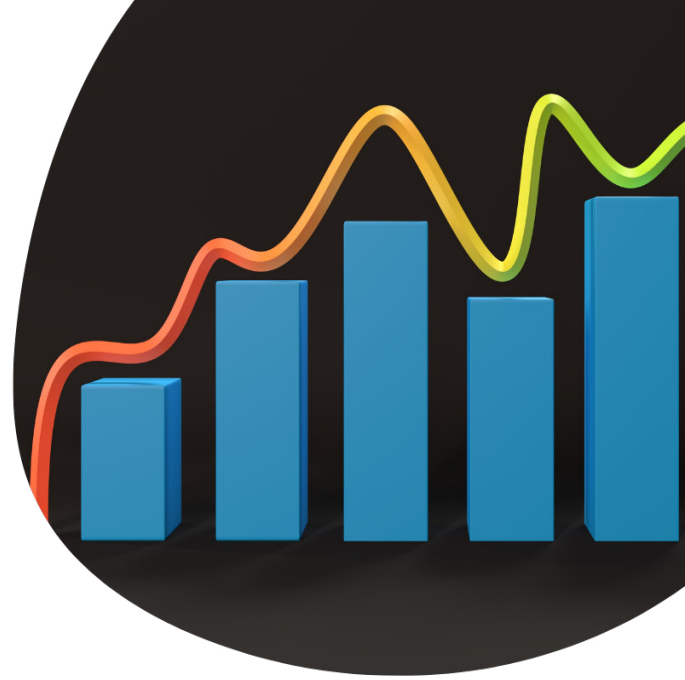
Creating better business impact

Fit within the flow of work

Rather than add to it

Are evidence informed

Each one links back to business success



Plays to Engage, Act and Improve

The data shows⁶ high performing learning teams are 13x more likely than their lower performing peers to agree that managers make time for learning. They also show us L&D enable managers in 3 ways:

Engage

High performing L&D teams create opportunities to engage with managers around their common agenda – they are 4x more likely to build relationships with stakeholders and learners, 5x more likely to focus on achieving performance outcomes.

Act

High performing L&D teams help managers to embed action within their team initiatives to support growth – they are 22x more likely to help teams learn collaboratively, 4x more likely to include activities in their solutions that help employees practice back in the workplace.

Improve

High performing L&D teams help managers encourage continual improvement. They are 8x more likely to develop managers as coaches and 20x more likely to encourage reflection.

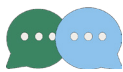
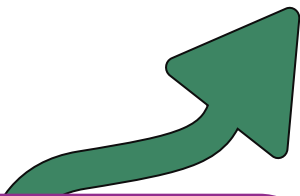
What's more, high performing teams are 62% more likely to equip managers with resources to help their teams get the most out of learning!

What is a playbook?

Playbooks are usually associated with sporting analogies, where a team may have a strategy that outlines specific ways to run a ball to score. However, playbooks are not just for sports – they are immensely helpful to any industry or job role looking to apply strategic or intentional actions to meet a challenge head on.

Inside this

This playbook contains 9 plays for L&D leaders to provide the resources needed to improve the process of “engaging”, “acting”, and “improving”. Take a look at all of the activities and choose the ones that work best for you, your managers, and fit best into your business culture.



ENGAGE

To engage managers with learning through work around a common agenda:

- Make it Matter
- Goal Attack
- Go to Gemba



ACT

To equip managers to take action with team initiatives to support growth:

- One Give/One Ask
- 505 Practise Support
- Daily Extract



IMPROVE

To help encourage managers with continuous improvement:

- How I Did This
- Power Hour
- Speedy Progress Check



Using the Engage, Act and Improve plays

Use these plays to experiment with new ideas, break new ground and explore new opportunities for smart partnerships:

- The plays in Engage will help you to engage managers with learning through work around a common agenda
- The plays in Act will help you to equip managers to take action with team initiatives to support growth
- The plays in Improve will help you to encourage managers with continuous improvement

Notes for playbook success:

Each play is set up to run and go, but to ensure real success here are a few suggested action items.



Plan

Be sure to read through the play and plan accordingly

- What you'll need
- Know the roles of the people participating
- Prepare and practise!

Run the play

With planning and practise, running the play will be easier.

- Use the tips incorporated in each play
- Plan for group engagement, know how to engage those who may need prompting
- Be prepared to take notes and determine action items

Prepare for follow up and sharing

- Take any notes and action planning and be prepared to share
- Know who will be responsible for future actions
- Plan time for note review. Make observations of themes or trends

Engage

Make It Matter

Goal Attack

Go To Gemba

Preparation
10 min

Run
30 min

Follow up
30 - 60 min

Make it Matter

Pick a work goal that matters to the manager and the team and identify what they need to do well to achieve this goal. Use this play at any time, or align it with the cadence of your organisation's goal setting (e.g. quarterly) or a project cycle.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Guide the Make It Matter conversation.	Participate in the conversation, provide data and select a goal.	Involve 1-2 experienced team members in the conversation.

Invite the manager to have an exploratory conversation about how you could work with them to help the team to successfully achieve their goals. Ask them to have data available about their current goals and recent performance.

Identify a goal 15 min

Meet with the manager and agree on the wildly important goal that you will support them to achieve. Find a goal that matters to them and where the team can improve to achieve success in the next 3-6 months.

- Ask what success looks like for their team.
- Explore their challenges and opportunities.
- Review team performance data together.
- Ask about work that the team could use to get better.

Tip:

Talk Business

Refer to '[50 tips for increasing L&D business value](#)' for tips and questions to speak with leaders about their goals.

Identify needs 15 min

Discuss what the team needs to improve (knowledge, skills, topics) to achieve the selected goal. Ask who else could answer this question.

Tip:

Run 'Goal Attack'

Use the Goal Attack play to get team input and buy-in to getting better.

Follow up

Speak with the people nominated by the manager and update the list of what the team needs to get better at doing.

Preparation
15 min

Run
30 min

Follow up
60 min

Goal Attack

Create a plan of attack for how the team will use their knowledge and skills to achieve a work goal. Gain better buy-in.

L&D

Manager

Individual

Facilitate Goal Attack workshop.

Participate in workshop.

Participate in workshop.

Open session 10 min

Manager to select an important team work goal.

Prepare a whiteboard or online collaboration board with three columns titled:

- Experience
- People
- Investigation (resources & courses)

○ Explain purpose of the session – to find ways to attack a work goal by getting better.

○ Ask everyone to think of one thing that they have gotten better at in the past six months.

○ Ask everyone to share how they got better.

○ Reveal the board and explain the three ways that people improve.

○ Ask which of these three approaches they used in their example.

○ Discuss which of the three was most common.

Gather input 20 min

Present the selected work goal and discuss why it matters.

○ Ask for examples of what people need to do to meet this goal.

○ Ask each team member to write down ideas for how to get better at these things on sticky notes, one idea per note.

○ Post the notes and group similar ideas together. Discuss them briefly as a group.

○ Have everyone vote for the 'best' ideas, up to three votes per person.

Follow up

Map ideas from the session into the plays in the Act and Improve stages in this playbook. Meet with the manager to review the activities to include in the Goal Attack plan and where they best fit in the team's flow of work.

Tip:
Run 'Make it Matter'
Use the Make It Matter play to identify a work goal prior to the Goal Attack session.

Preparation
10 min

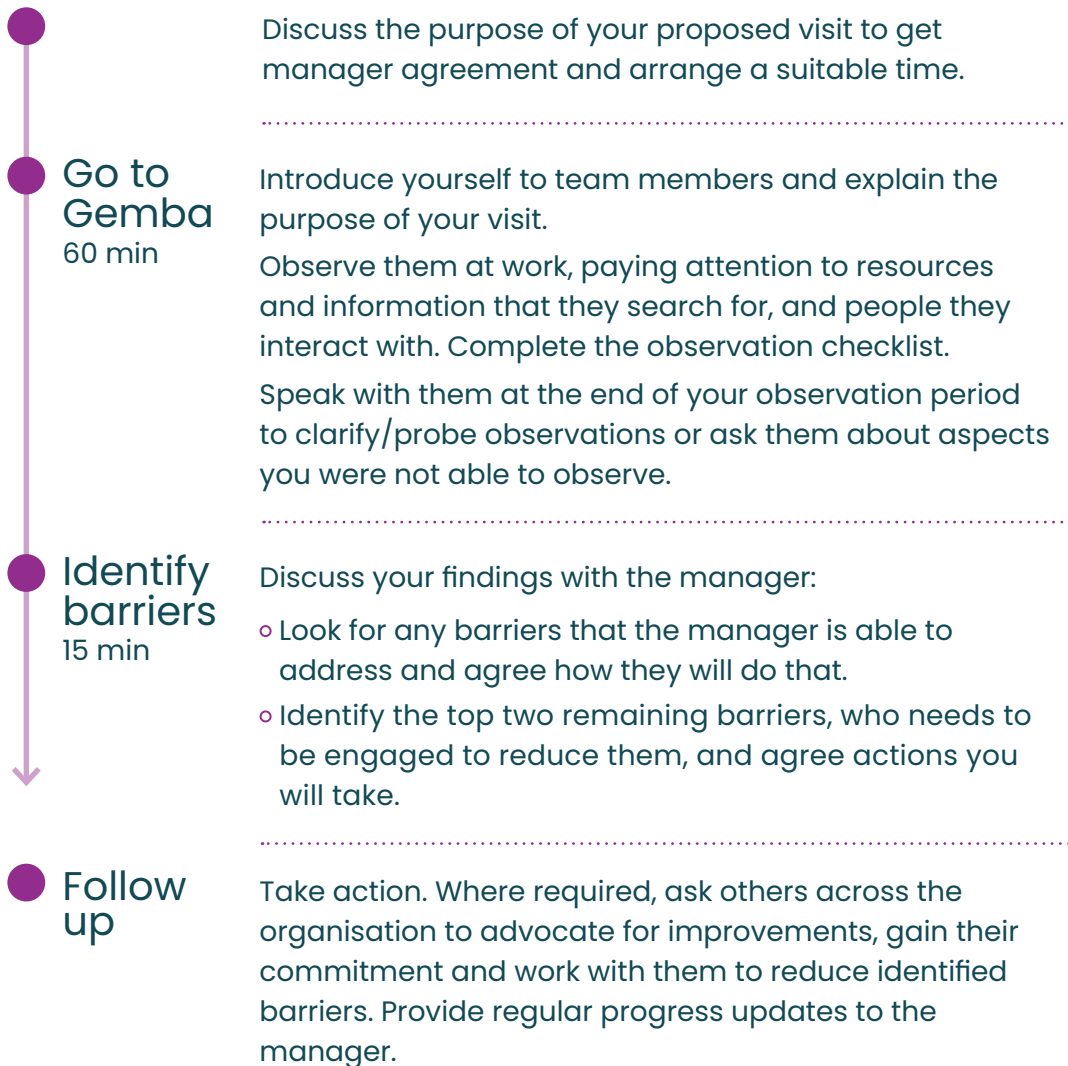
Run
60 min

Follow up
variable

Go to Gemba

Meeting people where they are at. Go to their workplace to identify and reduce friction points and barriers to make it easier for people to learn at work.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Identify and reduce barriers to learning with team insight.	Provide L&D with access to team and help to reduce barriers.	Allow L&D to observe their work and respond to questions.



Tip:
Get real
'Gemba' is a Japanese term which translates as 'The Real Place.' Go to where work gets done to understand how it gets done.



Go to Gemba Checklist

	Yes / No
Do people have ready access to the necessary computers/devices and IT infrastructure (e.g. bandwidth) to find information and resources they need?	
Are people able to efficiently search for information and resources (e.g. job aids, operating procedures etc) to do their job?	
Do the information and resources that people need to do their job safely, efficiently and effectively, exist?	
Are people able to work without pausing for lengthy periods to search for information and resources?	
Do people have access to high quality video connections for remote meetings?	
When appropriate are people able to readily find someone who can explain how to do steps/tasks or handle non-routine activities?	
Are people comfortable asking others for help or support?	
Are people able to get feedback on task performance and results from others and/or the work itself?	
Do people have the opportunity to practise skills?	
Do people have time to investigate and try better ways to do work tasks and improve their skills?	
Are people able to readily access and find relevant learning content and courses to meet their needs?	

Act

One Give/One Ask

505 Practise

Daily Extract

Preparation
5 min

Run:
15 min

Follow up:
10 min

One Give / One Ask

Help people connect with who can support them to solve problems and get better at their work, and create an environment that encourages people to give and ask for support. Run this play regularly or when required to work towards a specific goal.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Help manager set up a board if necessary.	Establish and drive engagement through the board.	Post a Give and an Ask, and connect with teammates on theirs.

- Set the scene**
5 min

Decide why and when you will use One Give/One Ask.
Prepare a board with two columns titled:
One Give / One Ask
If appropriate, write the work goal or topic that people are being invited to connect about at the top of the board.

Discuss the purpose of One Give / One Ask and guidelines. It's OK:

 - To not have all the answers
 - To ask for support or opportunity to practise
 - To offer support to your team
 - To share your knowledge and expertise with others

Clarify the topic/focus for the activity if there is one.
- Post give/ask**
5 min

Ask everyone to post one Give and one Ask on the board, each on a separate note with their name.
- Connect**
5 min

Invite everyone to read the posts and find someone to support or ask for support.
Encourage people to contact each other on the spot and arrange a time to talk, or to do so immediately after the gathering.
- Follow up**

2-3 days later, ask people who they have connected with and how they are supporting each other. At team meetings in following weeks, ask for success stories where people have supported each other, recognising and encouraging behaviour consistent with the guidelines in 'set the scene'.

Tip:

Go low tech

If your team does not have a physical or online work space where you can set up a board, adapt this play using hand-written notes.

Tip:

Encourage

'Learn-it-alls'

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella coined the term 'Learn-it-all' to encourage people to learn and grow rather than trying to prove they are the smartest person in the room.

Preparation
0 min

Run:
5 min

Follow up:
5 min

505 Practise Support

Help people create the opportunity to practise a skill, get feedback and reflect on the outcome, setting goals for further improvement.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Ensure manager is comfortable with the approach.	Host two 5-min chats to set intention and debrief with individuals.	Identify, use and build upon practise opportunities.

● Set intentions 5 min

Help each individual set an intention to practise:

- What do you want to practise?
- What work activities can you use to practise?
- Where and when could you practise?
- What or who do you need to practise with?
- How will you get feedback?

● Practise time

Leave them alone to practise.

● Debrief 5 min

Debrief after they've practised:

- What happened?
- What went well?
- What could you improve next time?

Tip:

Repeat Practise

Encourage people to repeat their practise of a specific skill to continue improving.

Tip:

Getting Feedback

Feedback is information about task performance. Apart from observations of another skilled person, timely feedback may come from the results of the task itself.

Preparation
10 min

Run:
1 min/person/day

Follow up:
5 min/wk

Daily Extract

Help people create a daily one-minute habit of extracting learning from their work.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Share examples of improvements through Daily Extracts.	Help people set a habit of extracting learning from their work.	Establish a one-minute Daily Extract habit.

Prepare

Invite people to join a 1 minute / day challenge. Help identify a point in their daily workflow for this activity and where they will make notes.

Daily 1-min extract 5 min

Everyone reflects on one of the questions below (or discusses in a group) and writes a short note of responses:

- What went well today? Why?
- What didn't go well today? Why?
- What could I/we do differently next time?

Weekly 5-min review 5 min

Everyone reviews their Daily Extract list to identify one improvement to continue, and what they need to do to sustain it. Tell others about it and ask for support if needed.

Nudge to embed

Manager to make it a daily habit to ask someone about their Daily Extract or weekly improvement. Congratulate and recognise people making it a habit.

Tip:
Habit triggers
Habits are triggered by cues in our environment, especially time and location. Ask people when and where they will do their Daily Extract.

Tip:
Look EAST
Use the EAST Framework to help people set up this new habit. Make it Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely.



Improve

How I Did This

Power Hour

Speedy Progress

Preparation
15 min

Run:
Variable

Follow up:
5 min/wk

How I did this

Encourage people to show others how they performed a task, solved a problem or made an improvement so that they and others can improve their work.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Demonstrate ways teammates can share how they work.	Advocate approach and encourage sharing amongst teammates.	Show others what you are working on and how.

- **Set the scene**

Discuss why and how to show others how you are working. Tell a story about how you saw one of them show someone else how they did something. Ask them to share a time when they learned from watching someone else work or listening to them describe how they worked.
- **Brainstorm how**

With team members, brainstorm a list of ways that people can show or tell others about how they did something. Examples such as:

 - Create a document e.g. diagram, slide, process flow
 - Share a screenshot
 - Make a video
 - Quick post in online chat
 - Respond to a question in person or online
 - Present/demonstrate at a team meeting
 - Interview/Q&A
- **Show your work**

Everyone to capture and share their work process with others.
- **Spot & support**

Manager to spot others doing things worth sharing and ask how they could capture and make their work process visible to others. Be a role model and show others how you work too!

Tip:
Frame it
Frame this practice as a contribution rather than 'showing off.'

Tip:
Make it familiar
At some point outside of work most of us have turned to the internet to find out how to do something - from YouTube videos to WikiHow instructions, blog posts or recipes. Many of these useful resources are created by amateurs. There are many ways to show others how you do things, and what you're learning as you get better.

Preparation
10 min

Run:
60 min

Follow up:
20 min

Power Hour

Create the time, permission and space for your team to grow with a regular monthly reflection session.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Empower and assist with establishing regular Power Hours.	Schedule, facilitate and participate in Power Hour.	Participate in Power Hour.

● **Prepare** Put a monthly Power Hour into your team calendar. A week before each session set a goal for the session and communicate this to your team. A Power Hour can focus on a specific skill or be a more general opportunity to surface improvements with peer support.

● **Set the scene** 5 min Set the scene and ground rules. It's OK to:

- be curious and not be an expert
- keep learning through new conversations, experiences, resources and courses
- have tried something new even if it didn't work
- ask for more support or opportunity to practise
- offer support to others

Tip:
Set the example.
You lead by example as a leader. Share your Power story regularly with your team.

● **Individual update** 45 min Options:

- a) 5 min per person or in pairs.
- b) If team is large, split into small groups.

- What's new since last time? What did we learn and how?
- What have I done differently? What worked? What didn't?
- What do I need from the team to keep on growing? (e.g. an opportunity to practise, a challenge or stretch task, resources).

Tip:
Get the Tool.
Download the Emerging Stronger Further [Power Hour Tool](#) for more tips, templates and to explore variations.

● **Reflection** 10 min Collective reflection: What's next? Agree next collective action.

● **Follow up** Note what people need to keep growing. Follow up to help people get what they need.

Speedy Progress Check

Preparation
15 min

Run:
30 min

Follow up:
15 min

Do a quick progress check to capture and improve impact and sustain momentum with team performance.

L&D	Manager	Individual
Regularly check in with Manager to discuss progress and impact.	Review progress and plan growth every 2-3 months.	Collaborate with feedback and ideas for improvement.

● Prepare

Manager to ask team members:

- What have you gotten better at doing in the past 2-3 months?
- How has this improved your work / the team's work?
- How have you made this improvement?
- What could help you to keep getting better?

Manager to arrange discussion with others (e.g. L&D manager, a colleague, or team members).

● Reflect 20 min

Review recent KPI/performance data and team member input to discuss:

- recent shifts in team results
- what skills / practices have improved across the team
- what is helping people to get better
- specific examples of progress to highlight/celebrate
- what might be holding people back/constraining growth

● Sustain 10 min

Brainstorm what to start, stop or continue doing to sustain momentum with improvement and growth.

● Follow

Manager to communicate to team:

- share examples of progress worth celebrating
- how you'll continue to support learning and sustain momentum

Tip: 80/20

Also known as the Pareto Principle: 20% of your effort creates 80% of your results. Ask 'what are the vital few things that have had the most impact on improvement and growth?'

Using the Playbook Recipes to equip managers

Remember high performing L&D teams are 6x more likely to equip managers with the resources they need to improve team learning. How are you going to use these plays with your Managers? Here are some recipes for working with these plays.

Onboarding

Engage	Goal Attack	Improve the onboarding experience Support manager to set an onboarding goal with a new starter, build their connection with the team, reflect on their progress and what they need to keep growing in the team.
Act	One Give / One Ask	
Improve	Power Hour	

New skills (e.g. new process)


Engage	Make it Matter	Master new skills quicker Help manager to link the new skill to a work goal, support their team members to create opportunity to practise, get feedback and learn from showing each other how they are working with the new skill.
Act	505 Supported Practise	
Improve	Speedy Progress Check	

Self-directed learning

Engage	Go to Gemba	Scaffold self-directed learning Help manager to remove barriers to learning, role model self-directed learning, and create an environment that makes it safe and easy to be a 'learn-it-all.'
Act	Daily Extract	
Improve	How I did it	

Team learning

Engage	Goal Attack	Learn purposefully with others Help manager to unite team members around a common goal and support each other to grow and improve in order to achieve the goal.
Act	One Give / One Ask	
Improve	Power Hour	

 **Your turn!**
Create your own recipe using these plays in your next project.

References

- 1 Fosway/Go1 research shared at CIPD Festival of Work
- 2 Learning Benchmark 2022
[Is your learning culture keeping pace with rapid digitalization?](#)
- 3 Learner intelligence
[Learner Intelligence Report: Engaging with learning in the reimagined workplace](#)
- 4 Degreed and HBR
[The New Role for Managers in Workplace Learning](#)
- 5-6 Learning Benchmark 2022
[Is your learning culture keeping pace with rapid digitalization?](#)

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