



2025 HR/L&D Trends Survey

Evolving in a Rapidly Changing Environment

Welcome to Blanchard's Sixth Annual HR/L&D Trends Survey Report

More than nine hundred leadership, learning, talent development, and business professionals were asked about their top challenges in navigating a workplace that continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace. As we enter 2025, organizations face both incredible opportunities and daunting challenges in navigating the new realities of talent acquisition, leadership, and learning and development (L&D). Our hope is that this report helps with your 2025 planning by identifying ways to stay ahead in a rapidly changing environment.

In the post-pandemic world, talent remains scarce, employee expectations are higher than ever, and the definition of work continues to shift. Organizations are being called upon to develop not just effective leaders but empathetic ones—leaders who can inspire, adapt, and thrive amid disruption.

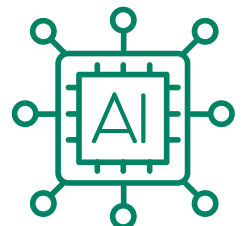




L&D must embrace technological advancements such as artificial intelligence while pioneering learning modalities that blend virtual and in-person experiences.

This eBook compiles key findings to help HR, L&D, and business professionals address these challenges. From attracting top talent to retaining high performers and from integrating cutting-edge technologies to fostering inclusive cultures, the insights presented here provide a roadmap for creating high-impact solutions that resonate with today's workforce.

As you explore these pages, you'll discover how to turn trends into actionable strategies and make 2025 a year of meaningful progress—one where innovation, leadership, and human connection converge to redefine the future of work.





Evolving Perspectives and Anticipated Challenges

In today's dynamic business landscape, HR, L&D, and business leaders face a wide range of challenges that demand evolving strategic adaptation and resilience.

Anticipated Challenges

A key feature of the Blanchard survey is collecting comments from respondents in their own words. In this year's report, thousands of these comments helped to fully define the landscape of challenges and realities leaders are anticipating. Here are seven critical themes identified for the coming year.

Attracting and Retaining Talent

Finding and keeping the right people with the necessary skills.

Adapting to Technological Change

Keeping up with rapid advancements in technology—especially AI.

Enhancing Leadership Bench Strength

Developing leaders for future organizational needs.

Maintaining Employee Engagement

Fostering collaboration and building inclusive, psychologically safe learning cultures.

Managing Change and Strengthening Resilience

Adapting to technological shifts and economic uncertainties.

Expanding Skills and Workforce Readiness

Providing consistent upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

Dealing with Resource Limitations

Delivering impactful L&D programs with limited resources.

At a High Level: Overall Organizational Challenges

Respondents to Blanchard's 2025 HR / L&D Trends Survey identified retention and engagement, organizational performance, and leadership capabilities as their top concerns for the coming year. This is consistent with high level outcomes identified in prior years.

Top Five HR Objectives for 2025

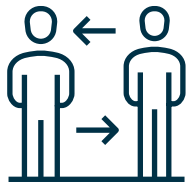
When specifically asked to select up to five most important Human Resources objectives for their organizations in the coming year, respondents identified (in descending order):

- 54%** Retaining high performers
- 53%** Developing leadership bench strength
- 48%** Attracting workers with the skills we need
- 46%** Enabling innovation and change
- 45%** Providing a great employee experience

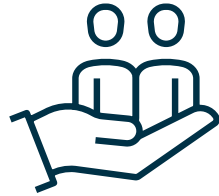
A focus on employee experience, engagement, development, and retention is visible across this year's themes. Issues such as employee flexibility, positive culture, and engagement continue to be prevalent in respondents' minds.



This year's survey took a deeper look into several key issues.



Employee
Engagement



Retaining
Talent



Ease of
Hiring



L&D Spending
on Training



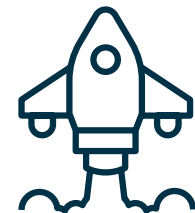
Training
Budgets



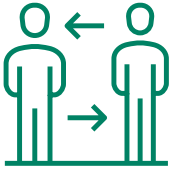
Evolution of
Training Modalities



Leadership
Development



Future
Skills



76%

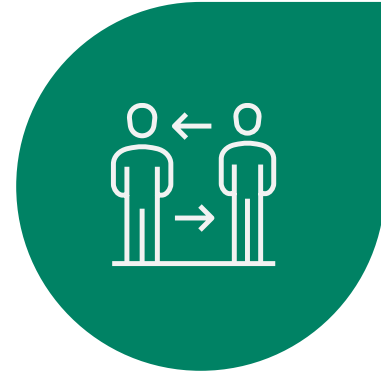
of respondents felt that their employee engagement levels were improving in their organizations, while 24% identified that conditions in their organizations were declining. This is an optimistic outlook which bodes well for the workforce.



A Closer Look

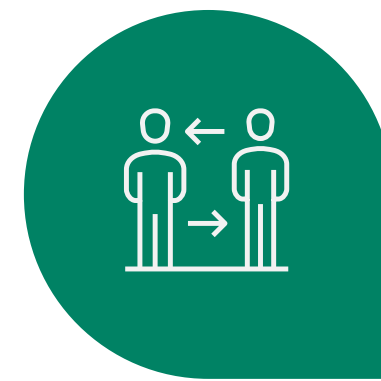
Across both groups, when respondents were asked what steps were being taken by their company to improve employee morale, more than 700 people shared what their organizations were doing. Here's a summary of the 10 most common strategies being employed.

- **Improved Communication.** This includes regular town hall meetings, open-door policies, employee feedback channels, and transparency from leadership. Efforts include more frequent updates on company strategy, goals, and changes affecting employees.
- **Enhanced Benefits and Compensation.** Respondents cited better health benefits, increased bonuses, flexible working arrangements, and additional paid time off. Some companies focus on well-being initiatives such as mental health support, gym memberships, and wellness programs.
- **Employee Recognition and Rewards.** Recognition programs such as “Employee of the Month,” annual award ceremonies, and personalized appreciation events were mentioned by survey respondents. Also cited were reward systems that included monetary bonuses, gift cards, or public acknowledgment for achievements.
- **Leadership Development and Manager Training.** Morale boosters included investing in leadership skills development to promote empathy, psychological safety, and better team management. Also, respondents identified regular coaching, training, and mentoring programs to improve leadership effectiveness.



A Closer Look, Continued

- **Career Development Opportunities.** Respondents mentioned their companies offering training programs, career mapping, skill enhancement workshops, and leadership pathways as well as providing access to educational resources like LinkedIn Learning or certification opportunities.
- **Focus on Work-Life Balance.** Many offerings such as flexible work arrangements, hybrid or remote work policies, and reduced workloads were cited. There was also an emphasis on organizations ensuring employees take PTO and reducing mandatory overtime.
- **Employee Engagement Initiatives.** Responses included engagement surveys, acting on feedback, and involving employees in decision-making as well as companies organizing team-building events, community gatherings, and employee appreciation weeks.
- **Focus on Mental Health and Wellness.** Organizations implemented mental health support programs, access to counseling, and wellness webinars. Respondents also cited designated days off for mental health and stress reduction initiatives.
- **Encouraging Collaboration and Team Building.** Hosting team outings, workshops, and activities to strengthen connections among employees were mentioned by respondents, as well as promoting a sense of camaraderie and teamwork through shared projects and events.
- **Improving Work Conditions.** Respondents identified companies renovating office spaces, adding recreational areas, and ensuring better tools and technology for work efficiency. Offerings also included introducing comfortable and welcoming office environments with amenities such as better coffee and indoor plants.





While signs point to a general softening in the labor market, respondents believe that employee retention will continue to be a challenge in 2025. The retention challenge begins with competitive wages and benefits. Next is creating an appealing work environment that provides a culture fit for everyone. The third element is providing growth opportunities at the individual job level and for workers' overall career aspirations.

Retaining Talent

A full 79% of respondents agreed with the statement: **Employee retention will be more challenging in 2025 than it has been in 2024.**

When asked "Which of these employee retention challenges is your company facing today?" respondents indicated:

- 45%** Burnout and workload issues
- 38%** Economic factors and cost of living
- 37%** Work-life balance and flexibility options
- 36%** Limited career growth and development opportunities
- 33%** Lack of leadership and effective management
- 32%** Difficulty offering competitive compensation/benefits
- 32%** Better offers from outside organizations
- 26%** Company culture and engagement
- 18%** Low sense of employee well-being



Responses revealed that finding candidates with the necessary skills, especially in competitive or low-paying markets, remains difficult. This issue is further complicated by what seems to be an increasing lack of interest in managerial roles among some individual contributors, and the ongoing effects of remote and hybrid work models.

To address talent acquisition, organizations might explore employer branding as well as leveraging their culture and benefits to attract candidates. Partnerships with educational institutions and reskilling programs could also help bridge skill gaps.

Ease of Hiring

Around **83%** of this year's respondents agreed with this statement: **Hiring will be more challenging in 2025 than it has been in 2024.**

When asked "Which of these hiring challenges is your company facing today?" respondents indicated:

- 42%** High competition for desirable talent
- 41%** Overall talent pool is limited
- 41%** Applicants lacking required skills
- 38%** Finding people who are a good culture fit
- 30%** Inability to offer competitive compensation/benefits
- 28%** Demand for career development
- 24%** Inability to meet remote work expectations
- 19%** Perception of having low employee engagement



Both budgetary limitations and balancing ambitious organizational transformation agendas with limited resources were frequently mentioned as barriers to achieving L&D goals. Many leaders face the challenge of delivering impactful programs with limited resources while justifying the ROI of these initiatives to stakeholders.

To optimize resource use, organizations are looking at scalable learning solutions such as virtual or hybrid models. Demonstrating ROI and aligning L&D programs with business outcomes are also being utilized to secure stakeholder buy-in.

L&D Spending on Training

Even though a significant number of respondents mentioned the challenges of doing more with less due to cost optimization pressures, **overall, respondents anticipate an 11.7% increase in overall training spending in 2025—and a 13.3% growth specifically in leadership development spending.**

When asked about factors impacting spending and budgets for the coming year, respondents identified:

- 48%** Budget constraints
- 44%** Overall economic conditions
- 42%** Inflation/rising costs
- 37%** Company business performance
- 34%** Workforce development needs
- 29%** Increased demand for technology/digital skills
- 28%** Need for improved employee retention
- 27%** Changes in strategic direction
- 27%** Reevaluating training needs



Evolution of Training Modalities

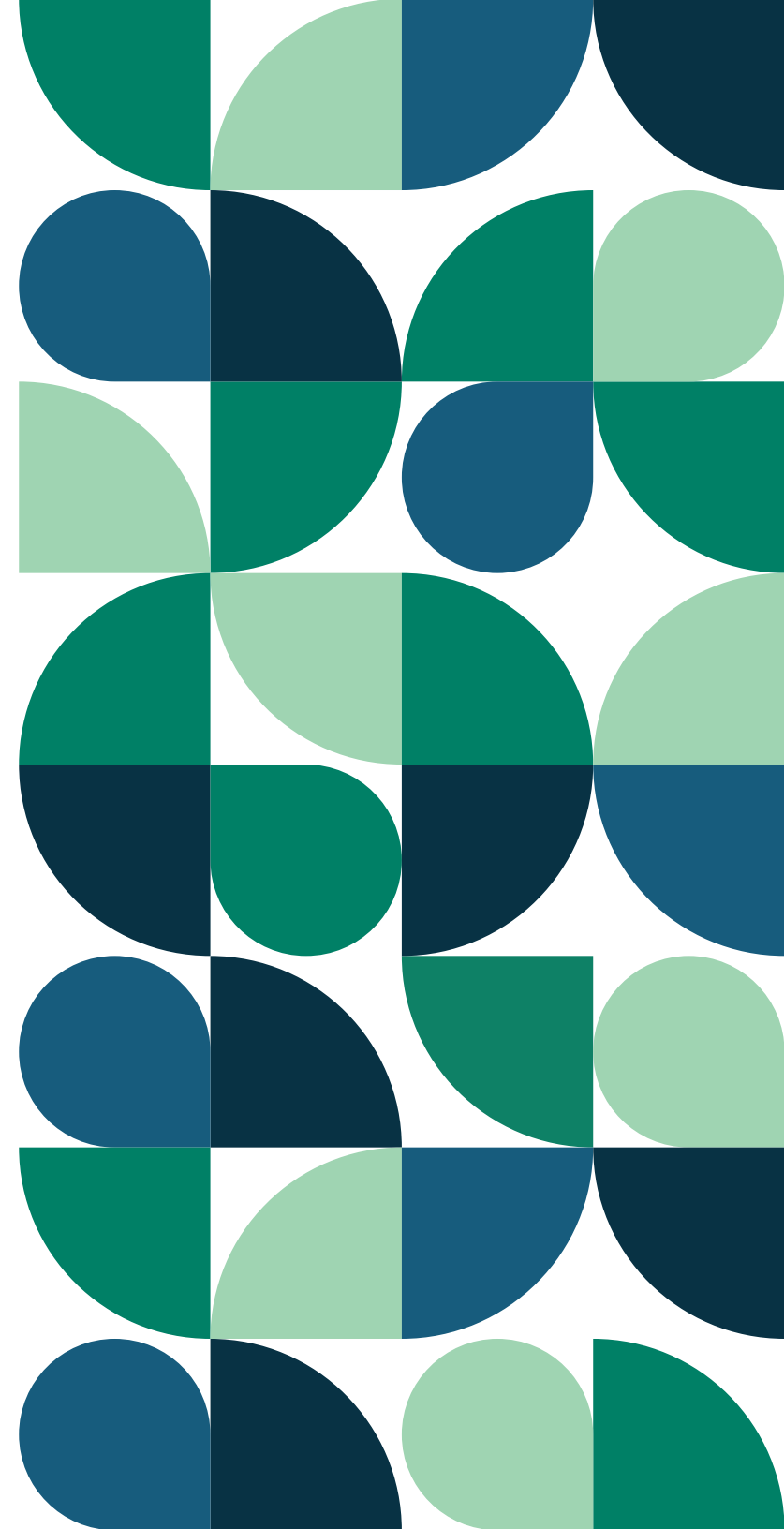
The way training is delivered has undergone a profound transformation since the start of the pandemic. Blanchard researchers have been tracking this data since March 2020.

This data for 2025 shows that in-person classroom training continues to see increased use.

42% In-person instructor-led training

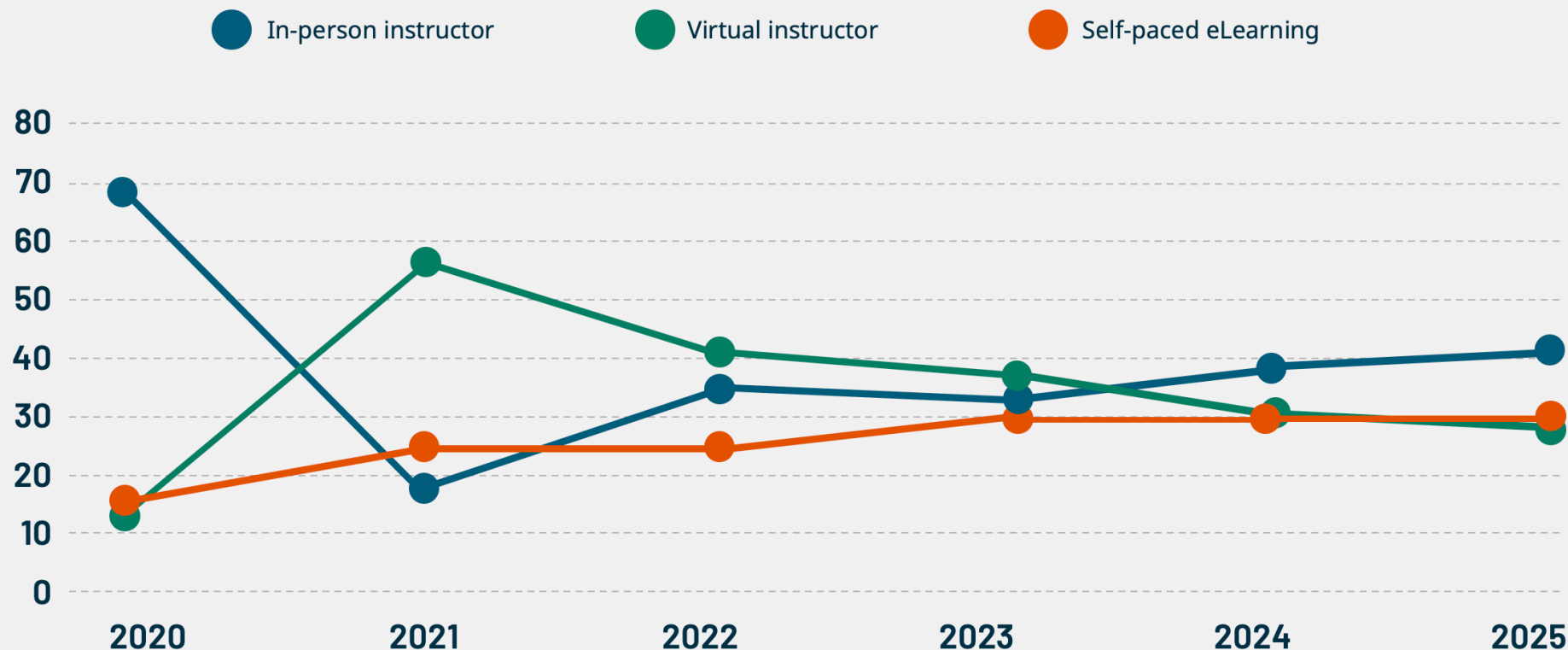
28% Virtual instructor-led training

30% Self-paced eLearning





Training Modalities Expected



Before COVID, almost 70% of training happened through in-person delivery. That number fell below 20% during 2021. Since then, in-person instructor-led training has been slowly increasing.

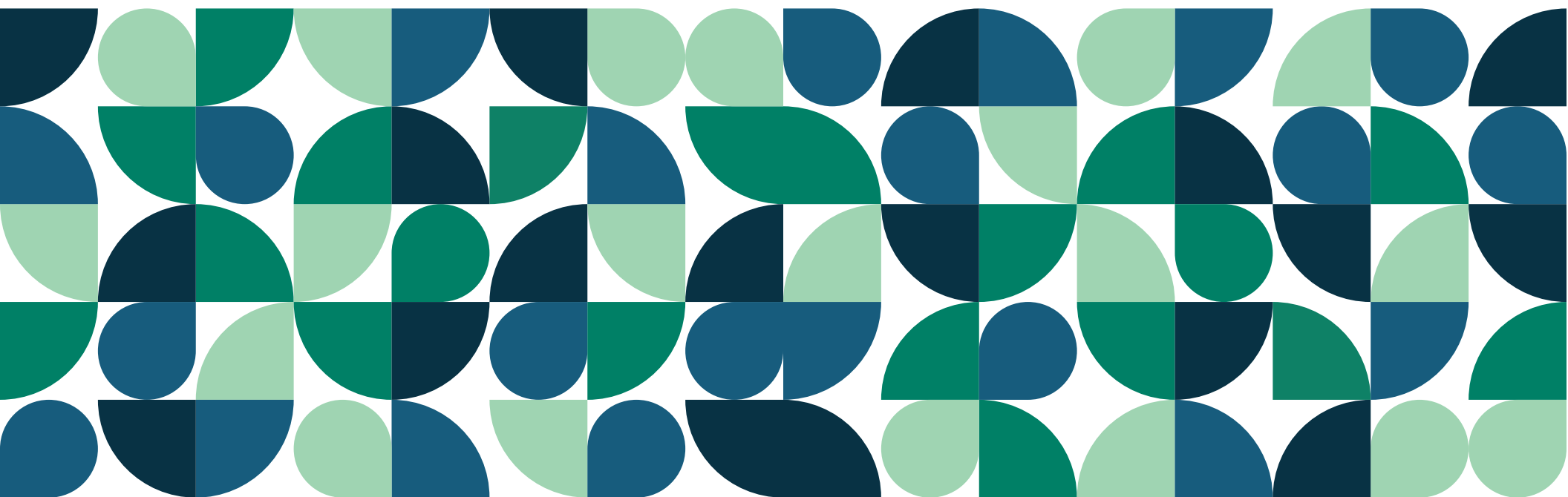
How Leaders Are Being Developed

Respondents were asked about leadership development methods they expect their organizations to use in the coming year. Respondents could choose any or all methods. In descending order, respondents identified:



- 64%** Leadership workshops
- 50%** Online courses
- 45%** Coaching services
- 44%** Mentoring/Shadowing programs
- 35%** Experiential/Action learning projects

- 31%** Peer groups
- 26%** Job rotation
- 25%** Industry conferences
- 15%** University classes





Leadership Development Capabilities

Leaders must equip themselves with a diverse range of competencies to navigate the complex business landscape. What skills are needed to be successful today and in the future? Respondents identified the following competencies needed in 2025:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 39% Coaching and mentoring people | 24% Defining vision and strategy |
| 38% Communicating effectively | 24% Acting with emotional intelligence |
| 35% Developing people's skills | 23% Building employee resilience and well-being |
| 32% Leading change initiatives | 23% Driving innovation |
| 31% Adapting to new challenges | 23% Managing conflict productively |
| 29% Setting goals and priorities | 22% Making smart decisions |
| 28% Solving problems creatively | 14% Cultivating a sense of inclusion and belonging |
| 25% Balancing empathy and accountability | 13% Learning eagerly from new experiences |



Emerging Leadership Themes

Respondents also wrote in hundreds of other leadership competencies and topics. Blending these responses with the prior options yielded additional themes. These four skill set clusters emerged as critical to leading in the coming years.

Lifting People Up

- Coaching and mentoring
- Developing people's skills
- Building team member resilience and well-being

Interacting Helpfully

- Communicating effectively
- Having emotional intelligence
- Balancing empathy and accountability

Being a Change Agent

- Adapting to new challenges
- Leading and supporting change
- Driving innovation

Leading Smartly

- Setting goals and priorities
- Solving problems creatively
- Defining vision and strategy



Turning Insights Into Action

The insights from this year's Blanchard HR / L&D Trend Report provide a roadmap for addressing the evolving challenges and priorities faced by HR and L&D professionals. These recurring themes—leadership development, talent acquisition and retention, hybrid work challenges, technology integration, employee engagement, and measuring impact—represent both pressing needs and transformative opportunities for organizations.

To thrive in an era of constant change, organizations must take decisive actions aligned with these insights:

- **Prioritize Leadership Development:** Focus on upskilling leaders with future-ready competencies such as emotional intelligence, resilience, and adaptability. Implement succession planning and tailored development programs to build a robust leadership pipeline.
- **Revamp Talent Strategies:** In the war for talent, offer competitive compensation, flexible work arrangements, and clear growth pathways. Create a purpose-driven workplace where employees feel connected to the organization's mission.
- **Reimagine Workplaces:** Adapt to the realities of hybrid and remote work by fostering trust, collaboration, and inclusivity. Build mechanisms to maintain engagement and a sense of belonging regardless of location.
- **Leverage Technology:** Embrace digital transformation by integrating AI and innovative learning platforms. Use blended learning modalities to deliver agile, scalable, and impactful training.
- **Enhance Employee Well-Being:** Place employee wellness and mental health at the center of engagement strategies. Provide growth opportunities, align work with purpose, and build trust through transparent communication.
- **Measure Impact Effectively:** Move beyond traditional metrics to assess behavior changes and organizational outcomes. Demonstrate the ROI of L&D investments using data-driven insights.

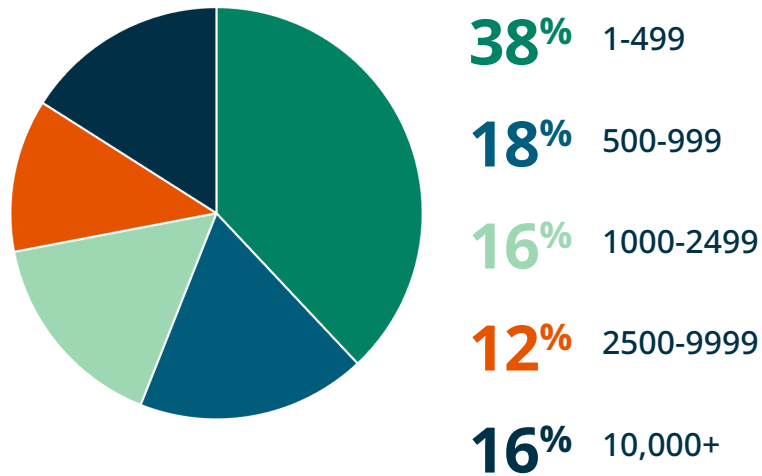
Organizations that act on these strategies will not only address current challenges but also position themselves for sustained success. The journey forward requires commitment, innovation, and alignment with evolving workforce expectations. By translating these trends into action, we can create workplaces where employees thrive, leaders inspire, and businesses flourish.



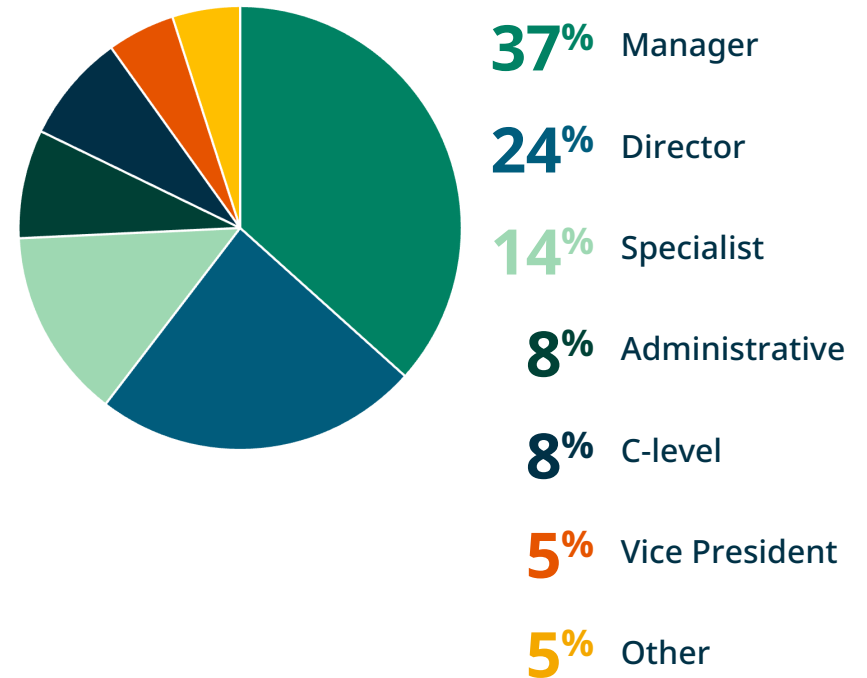
Survey Demographics

The 2025 HR/L&D Trends Survey was completed by 944 people between November 11 and November 30, 2024. Respondents represented 21 industries and 66 countries.

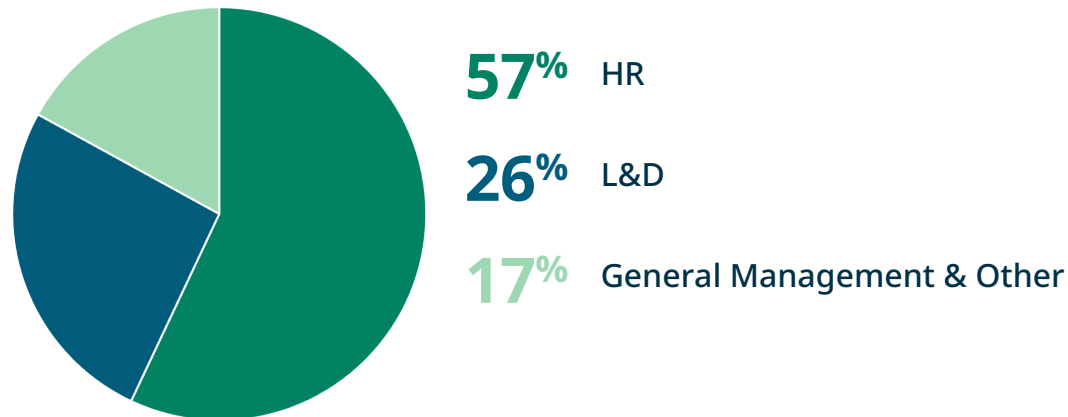
Organization Size



Level



Functional Area



Blanchard® is a global leader in leadership development, consulting, and coaching. For more than 45 years, Blanchard has partnered with organizations to maximize individual achievement and organizational performance, bringing measurable progress and true transformation. Blanchard's SLII® is the global leadership model of choice, powering inspired leaders for more than 10,000 organizations worldwide. Blanchard also offers a suite of award-winning solutions through flexible delivery modalities to meet the specific needs of clients and learners.

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