

WHITEPAPER:

# GREAT ORGANIZATIONS START WITH GREAT LEARNING CONTENT

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THINKING BEYOND THE LMS TO CREATE LEARNING THAT DRIVES RESULTS

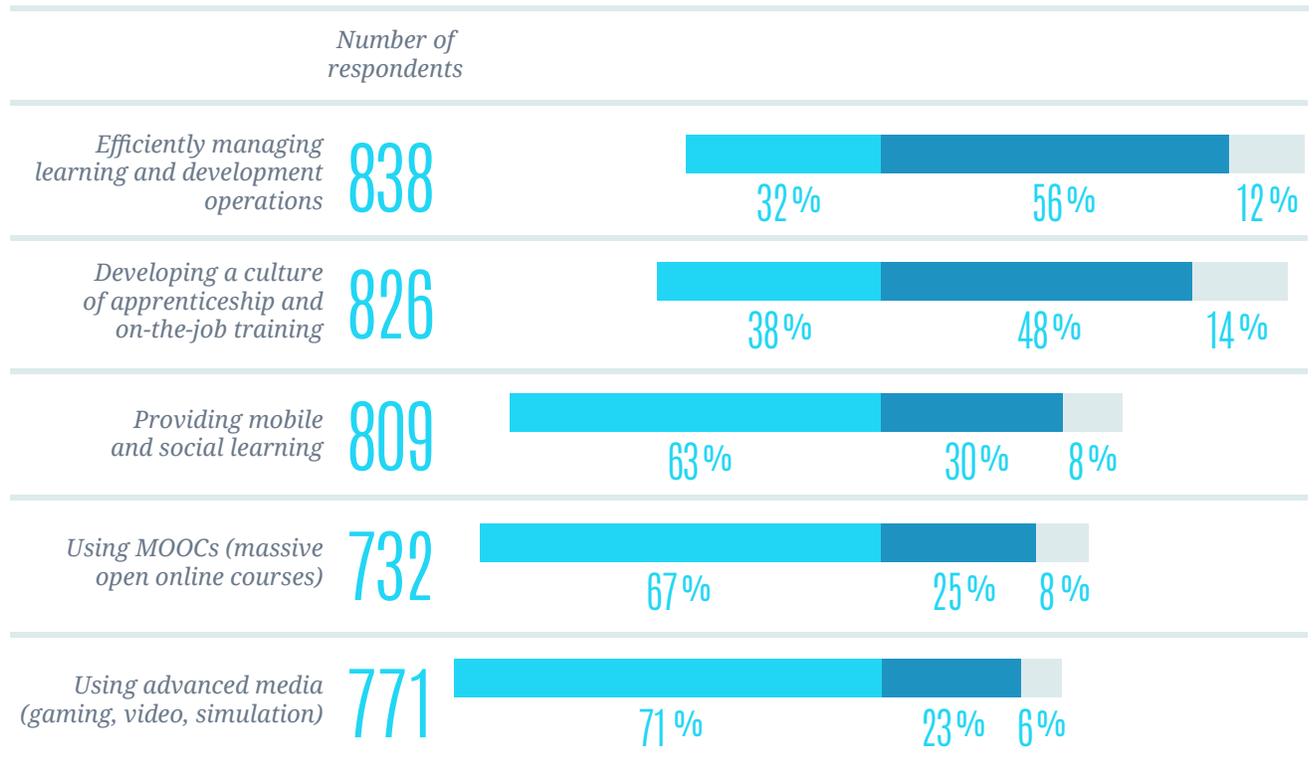
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## Introduction

Learning has changed significantly, even within the last five to 10 years. Learning organizations are more technologically equipped, but they're asked to do more with less staff. Adding to the pressures of having to do more with less, businesses are *demanding* more responsive, more agile, and better-performing learning organizations overall.

Although organizations expect greatness from their learning programs, most just aren't there yet. Some aren't there by a long shot. While the list of explanations and excuses is long, there have been mismanaged priorities driven by both the business and the learning organization that have led to these expectations being missed.

## SLOW ADOPTION OF LEADING-EDGE LEARNING TOOLS



**% OF TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES**

HR EXECUTIVES' ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITY LEVELS

■ Weak
 ■ Adequate
 ■ Excellent

*Part of the reason companies have been slower to adopt leading-edge-learning technology is, in our view, directly tied to the lack of quality content.*



More than two-thirds of companies in Bersin by Deloitte's global learning survey see evolving their learning practices as "urgent" or "important," yet only 6 percent believe they have mastered the content and technology capabilities needed to make online learning an accessible tool and a compelling experience for their employees.<sup>1</sup> That 60 percent divide between prioritization and the reality of today's learning programs isn't going away anytime soon.

Some of those mismanaged priorities come down to heavy investment in learning management systems (LMS). The LMS has been sold as the end-all, be-all of your learning technology stack with new or upgraded features every few years. Other new technologies and strategies, like MOOCs, crowdsourcing, gamification, and social learning, become shiny distractions from the real problem: the lack of engaging learning content that drives results.

Learning content is the heart of your learning organization. We're big believers in these technologies (even the beleaguered LMS) when you have the content in place to make them successful. But most organizations aren't there yet, or they have great content that's not structured in a way to take advantage of learning technologies.

In this whitepaper, we're going to cover how to set your learning content free to drive the results your organization needs from you. We'll hit:

- *Common failures that come from over-relying on an LMS*
- *The dangers of not getting content right*
- *Why better content matters*
- *How to create smart, sustainable content*

<sup>1</sup> <http://dupress.com/articles/hc-trends-2014-corporate-learning-redefined/>



# THE FAILURES OF OVER-RELYING ON THE LMS FOR LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

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LMSs don't get a lot of love from learning professionals. In fact, in a recent survey, learning professionals rated their favorite LMS at a negative 33 percent Net Promoter Score. We probably don't have to tell you this, but that's not a good score.

An LMS can actually be a great solution and should probably be a part of learning in many organizations. But up through and including today, most organizations jam an LMS into their learning programs like a square peg into a round hole.

Organizations and LMS providers are both to blame. Organizations see an LMS as the central technology behind their learning organizations, and LMS providers are only happy to oblige. Furthermore, learning technology, like most enterprise technology purchases, aren't fully understood until months — or even years — after the contract has been signed and thousands of hours of work have been put into it.

Part of the error also has to fall into industry groupthink about the centrality of the LMS — even as everyone preaches the 70-20-10 doctrine (70 percent of learning is informal,

20 percent is experiential or on-the-job, and 10 percent is formal online or classroom-based courses). LMSs are capable of keeping track of the 10 percent of formal learning, but they're lacking when it comes to the other 90 percent.<sup>2</sup>

We know this sounds harsh, but organizations and LMS providers have both pushed LMS technology into areas it was never intended to cover. And one of those critical areas is learning content.

With only an LMS to manage learning content, organizations are stuck using rapid-authoring tools for single-use content that is more focused on the presentation than the content itself. Furthermore, there is no way to reuse any of the content, so work must constantly be redone.

Content is the foundational element of learning and it's something that, ironically, LMSs aren't great at managing or working with. Even the best, most advanced LMS technology will struggle without the right content management in place. That's a major problem for learning organizations.

<sup>1</sup> <http://elearningindustry.com/trends-in-lms-content-how-are-we-creating-content-for-the-modern-lms>



# PRIMARY CATALYSTS DRIVING THE NEW GLOBAL ELEARNING ECOSYSTEM



THE NEW E-LEARNING ECOSYSTEM IS BUILT AROUND CONTENT, NOT THE LMS

Ambient Insight 2012



# THE DANGERS OF NOT GETTING CONTENT RIGHT

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We love watching the evolution of learning technology. Every week, there seems to be a new technology that promises to help organizations fix their learning struggles.

We've learned from our experience with clients that there is no magic wand to fix their learning content woes. In fact, any learning technology promising that you can create great learning outcomes without spending the time to create great learning content should be given a heavy amount of scrutiny.

One example is crowdsourced learning content through wikis or other collaboration tools. Instead of spending time with instructional designers and subject-matter experts, carefully creating engaging learning content, you rely on all of your employees to contribute shared knowledge. Eventually, you'll get a content library that's vetted by hundreds or thousands of contributors and is constantly updated. At least, that's the promise.

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***There are some substantial hidden costs that come with that strategy:***

***Bad, inaccurate, and inconsistent content:***

Your employees are great at their jobs, but they're probably not great at writing content that is helpful for their peers. Inaccuracy and inconsistency are also major pain points, which can be frustrating instead of empowering for end users.

***Resource drain from managing content:***

While a crowdsourced approach to content creation may make the costs of creating

content nearly invisible, you're not getting it on the cheap. In addition to your employees spending time creating content, you have to manage the content with your own team — trying to make it searchable and fixing errors.

***It takes years to get crowdsourcing right:***

Creating a culture of thoughtful content creation among employees doesn't take weeks or months — it takes years, as well as programs and budget that support that strategy.



We don't mean to pick on crowdsourced content. There are certainly a lot of poor content strategies out there. We think there is a better strategy to get learning content on track, so you can drive the results you need. That strategy involves:

***Understanding what your organization lacks when it comes to learning content:*** Where are your weak spots and how do you identify other problem areas?

***Giving contributors the means to create content easily:*** How do instructional

designers and subject matter experts best and most efficiently create content together?

***Ensuring that content supports the entire learning ecosystem:*** Where else can the content you create be of use, whether it's in the LMS, the classroom, a social learning platform, or somewhere else?

Why does content matter for the success of your learning initiatives?

## OBSTACLES TO 'PULLING' LEARNING AT WORK



Employees don't have (or make) the time



Managers don't encourage, enable, or follow up



People are not aware of what is available



Workers are not finding what they want when they need it



Executives don't support, recognize, and reward learning



The learning just is not engaging (enough)



The learning offered is not relevant (enough)



Something else



***Understanding the shortcomings of the overall current learning strategies is critical to developing a better learning content strategy going forward.***

Source: Bersin by Deloitte, Three Marketing Lessons for Learning and Development, 6/2014



# WHY BETTER CONTENT MATTERS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

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There will always be the push and pull of new technologies that seem to promise that the answer to your content woes is newer, shinier technology instead of fixing the fundamental issues that plague learning content. Here are five reasons why getting learning content right matters for organizations:

***Garbage in, garbage out.*** When you put in bad content, you're going to get bad results. When it's poorly formatted, it can't be reused, or it can't be found, that learning content is dead weight on the organization that created it.

***Import it and forget about it.*** Some organizations just import bad legacy content to new systems and hope — maybe through magic — that it will work better in a new system. Numerous experts have laughed off that approach, as well as rapid-authoring tools that promise to convert mountains of Word and PowerPoint documents into usable e-learning content with little effort.<sup>3</sup> If it were that easy, everyone would do it.

***Content overload is real.*** The fact is this: You have a ton of content. Most learning professionals say their learners are overwhelmed by the amount of information they have at their disposal. There will always

be a glut of content for the most complex businesses — being demanded at the speed of business — which is why it's critical to create, reuse, and assemble content quickly and correctly, and be able to update it easily as business needs change.

***Content inaccessibility.*** Content that isn't searchable or accessible, including problems in content conversion like missing metadata, essentially makes your content invisible to the learner.<sup>4</sup> Updating metadata may not sound like important work, but when content search and recommendation functionality depend on it, you can have great content that never is found.

***Bad decision-making follows bad content.*** Flawed content is worse than not having any content at all because it comes at two significant costs: the maintenance cost of keeping an archive of flawed content and the cost of false confidence that comes from it. That second one can be the real back-breaker for organizations.

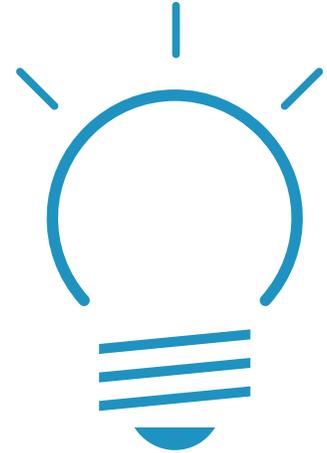
Content matters for learning organizations, but how do you create the right processes for curating and creating the right content at the right time?

<sup>3</sup> <http://elearningindustry.com/top-5-tips-to-convert-your-traditional-course-into-an-elearning-format>

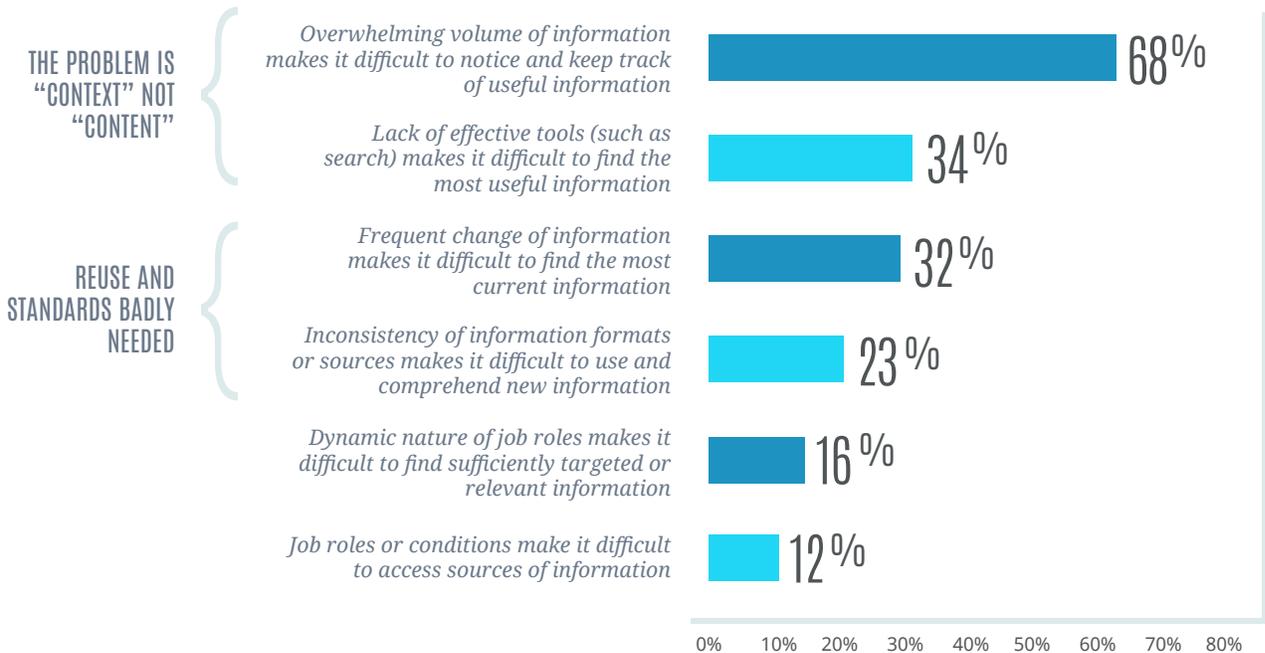
<sup>4</sup> <http://zope.cetis.ac.uk/content2/20040402013222/>



The below chart illustrates how the top four concerns for knowledge workers have to do with duplicate, bad, or unstandardized and non-reusable content.



## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE HOLDS BACK KNOWLEDGE WORKERS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?



Source: Bersin & Associates, 2012.



# CREATING SMART, SUSTAINABLE LEARNING CONTENT IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE

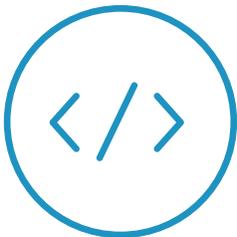
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If you have learning content issues, you're not alone. But the work can seem insurmountable, especially for those with the largest content libraries or with lean learning organizations. Where do you start? How do you approach it to get the best results? And how do you create a process that future-proofs your content-creation efforts going forward?

You need a strategy that encompasses your current and legacy content, what you're creating in the near term, and ultimately a long-term strategy for getting learning content under control.

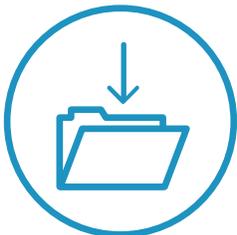
## *How to approach your current or legacy content*

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***Make it smarter:*** If you have content that is unsearchable, create tags and metadata that make it instantly available to your end users and content creators.

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***Archive bad content:*** When learners have to struggle through mountains of subpar content, they can't find the great, engaging content that will make them come back again.

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***Make it bite-size:*** Some of that legacy content you created years ago probably has nuggets of information that you can still use. Cut it into manageable pieces and reuse it so that your instructional designers aren't spending time reinventing the wheel.



## How to create content today that's ready for tomorrow

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**Think smaller, shorter, and reusable:** Your authors probably have less time to contribute and your learners have less time to learn — but no less need to learn. Creating smaller pieces of content is a win-win, and not just for performance support content, but for everything.

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**Create a hit list of topics:** What types of learning content do your employees and customers need? Where is current content lacking? Determine the top 50 topics you need to move the business forward and start there. With a single hour of training costing upwards of \$15,000, it's critical to prioritize and make the most of lean resources.<sup>5</sup>

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**Make it easy for everyone in your learning ecosystem:** Make it easy for content contributors to create content and for your learners to learn, wherever they are. Reduce barriers to authoring, managing, and delivering content.

### How to assess your long-term content strategy needs

**Treat learning content as a reusable business asset.** Content that you create needs to be flexible, searchable, social, and mobile. By locking it into a single mode of use, you are creating disposable content. Short-term wins do not equal long-term gains. By managing the content separate from its presentation, you increase the livelihood of your content and its long-term value to the organization.

**Determine your content mix.** Three-quarters

of organizations use both internal and third-party resources to create learning content. With changes in the way you operate your learning organization, it may also dictate a new look at the resources you use.

**Track usage and results, adjust where necessary.** After six to 12 months, you should have enough data to see where your next challenges lie. Winning the war of learning attrition starts with knowing the best place to start.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.brandonhall.com/blogs/learning-content-management-technology/>



## CHANGE IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITY GAP BETWEEN 2014 AND 2015



*Learning is getting more complex, and it's reflected in the importance and capabilities gap*

THE PERCENTAGE CHANGE FIGURE AND UP ARROW DENOTE AN INCREASE IN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE CAPACITY GAP.

Source: Deloitte University Press | DUPress.com

## CREATING GREAT CONTENT – AND GREAT ORGANIZATIONS – TOGETHER

Too many organizations are missing the boat on learning content. You may have an LMS you can work with, rapid-authoring tools you like using, and even the newest, most progressive learning tools. But without the right learning content management strategy and tools in place, you'll never be able to hit your full potential as a learning organization.

We're not going to pretend that getting your content strategy in order is going to be easy. It will be easier when you partner with a provider that understands the importance of

content, can help you craft a strategy, and will provide you with the technology that can get your organization on track.

For more than a decade, Xyleme has specialized in helping organizations grapple with big content issues using our content management platform. We've found that content management technology is necessary to support your content strategy across your entire learning ecosystem, as well as make your LMS perform at its full potential.



## We can help you:

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**Author better learning content:** Single-source authoring creates one source of learning truth, allowing ease of reuse, encouraging author collaboration, and creating scalable processes. It's the core of your learning organization and we treat it that way.

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**Deliver learning content faster:** Anywhere your employees operate is where your learning needs to be. Get seamless delivery to any system, application, and device with our Content Delivery Service (CDS).

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**Analyze learning content smarter:** You have limited content creators. Let's unleash them on the pieces of content that are going to drive results today and tomorrow.

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Ready to get the most out of your content investments and drive business results? [Get in touch with us today](#) to find out how we can help.

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