abara

What should your training look like in 2020!

eBook | 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The purpose of this eBook is to actively educate and update the current practices governing the eLearning space. It allows readers to understand and plan their training initiatives for 2020 in a way that is modern, interesting, and impactful.

The eBook is divided into four sections:
1. 7 Tools and Features that are 2020 ready
2. What modern learners like and dislike in 2019 and how to address them in 2020
3. Tips on how to plan your training activities for the year
4. What real L&D and HR professionals are doing across the globe (primary research results)

Here are four distinct factors to keep in mind for 2020:

1. Use training automation tools
2. Structure training in a way that is:
    a. Measurable
    b. Scalable
    c. Cost-effective
3. Factor your learners'/employees' likes and dislikes
4. Define clear training goals for the year

Use these 4 factors as a guideline when creating your training activity. It is a good way to ensure your training is relevant to today's standards.

Planning a successful eLearning campaign for 2020 is simple. As an L&D or HR professional, here are 7 tools and features that can help you achieve this.

TOOL 1 — Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Most people in the eLearning space already know or are aware about Learning Management Systems (LMS). However, there is a need to fully understand why an LMS important.

An LMS is a platform used to automate, structure, and formalise your informal training activities.

In the case of corporate training, traditional training approaches (classrooms, trainers, books, and pencils) are considered unstructured or informal training.

Why is this so?

Traditional training is considered informal or unstructured because:
- Classroom training is inconsistent and can vary based on the trainer.
- Training impact can defer based on the engagement levels of learners.
- There are no digital records of the training recorded. Neither is there a digital record of the assessments.
- Revisiting training becomes difficult if digital records are not created.

This unstructured nature of traditional training is why you need an LMS. The LMS acts as a foundation for all current and future training activities to be built upon. Furthermore, not all LMSes are capable of training a modern workforce.

In 2020 you need an LMS that is advanced and built to train a dynamic work-force

You need an LMS that:
- Is mobile friendly/optimised
- Is capable of operating in an offline mode
- Presents powerful reporting and analytics feature
- Has a modern UI and UX that is future-proofed
- Is a light and wieldy platform, free off unrequired features/bloatware

When building an advanced LMS into your corporate training framework, you are basically setting up a system that will ensure your training is structured, formal, trackable, measurable, and scalable. It acts as the L&D's extended arm, keeping a track of everything and providing the needed reports.

To understand the benefits of using an LMS, a well-known software suite provider carried out a research. This research analysed L&D and HR professionals to understand the benefits of using an LMS as noted by them.

Here are the results:

- 40% of the respondents noted increase in revenue.
- 53% respondents noted increase in productivity.
- 26% respondents noted reduction in costs.
- 16% respondents noted decrease in employee turnover.

LMS USER RESULTS
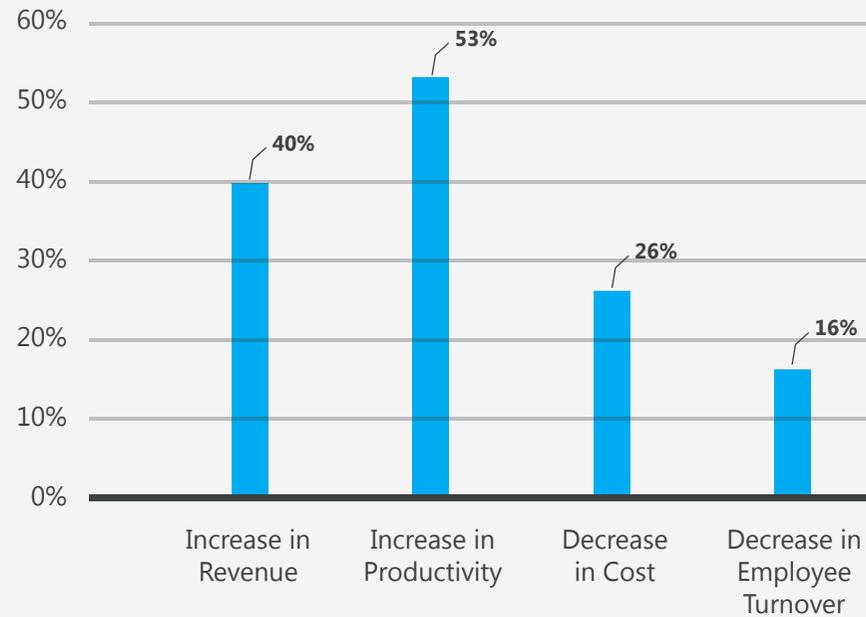
— iSpring Suite
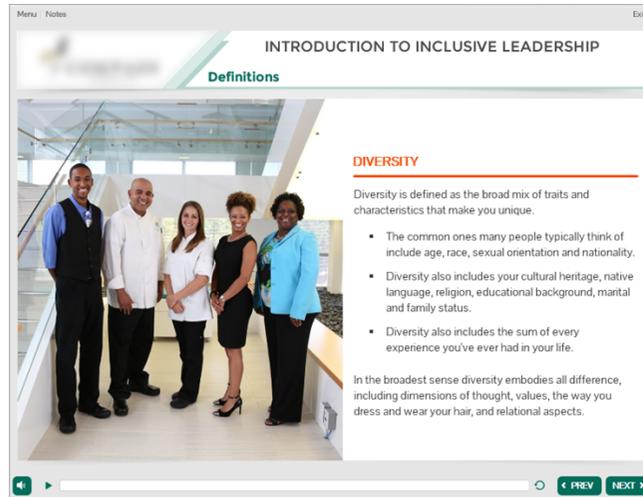
TOOL 2 — eLearning Courses

Once your advanced LMS is in place, it needs high-quality content which encourages learners to access and train on your platform. The fuel or the content that powers the LMS are eLearning courses.

These eLearning courses are not your simple collage of **Word documents** + **PowerPoint** + **YouTube videos** + **PDFs**. eLearning courses are built to train your employees in a way that keeps them engaged, makes an impact, and can be reused. Furthermore, these eLearning courses are designed to track and measure your learners' engagement through assessments.

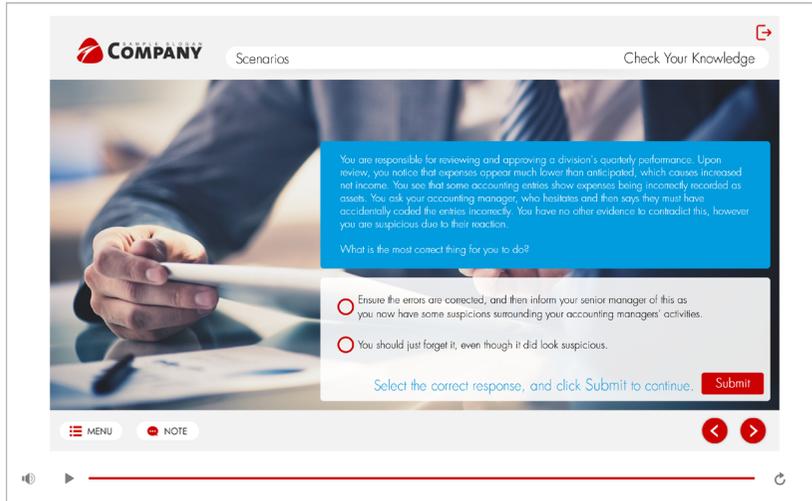**eLearning courses can be classified into three approaches:**
1. **Level 1**
2. **Level 2**
3. **Level 3**

LEVEL 1

A level 1 approach to eLearning is your most basic type of eLearning. It is built keeping urgency of training, quantum of training required, changing training needs, and lower training budgets in mind.

LEVEL 2

Level 2 eLearning courses are mid-level training content. These courses are better suited for advanced training needs.

LEVEL 3
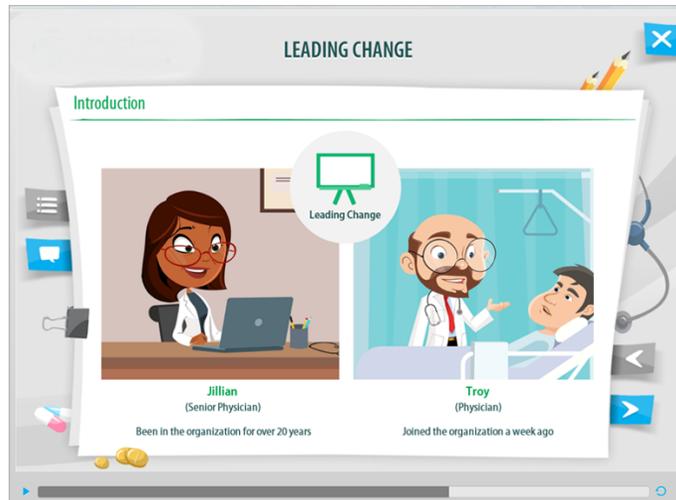
Level 3 is the most advanced type of eLearning. These courses generally take longer durations to design and make. Level 3 are best suited for complex topics where the motivation to take these programs might be lower and so higher learner engagement level is required.

As an L&D professional, carefully measure and understand the type of eLearning course best suited to your current needs. Once you have identified this, proceed to develop your eLearning course in either one of two ways.

1. **Do-It-Yourself using authoring tools**
2. **Get an expert and outsource to a vendor**

TOOL 3 — Authoring Tools

Authoring tools are powerful applications used by professional Instructional Designers to develop eLearning courses. These tools are capable of designing all three levels of eLearning.

However, authoring tools also provide another advantage. They can be used to create level 1 type of content where you do not have the technical expertise needed from an agency.

If your training needs are:
- Simple,
- Urgent,
- Cost-conscious, and
- Short in duration

An authoring tool is best suited for you. Furthermore, your eLearning course can be a combination of the following elements:
- Text
- Audio
- Video
- Interactivity
- Assessments

" **Interactivity** is when a course asks learners to take actions, basically, interact with the course. For example, nice-to-know information is displayed in a layered approach so getting the learners to click on tabs or icons to reveal some information helps bring a more active experience to the training. **"**

Create Courses In-House

No Dependency on External Egencies

AUTHORING TOOLS

Minimum Costs Involved

Create Courses as the Need Arises

Samples of eLearning courses created using the Abara Author:
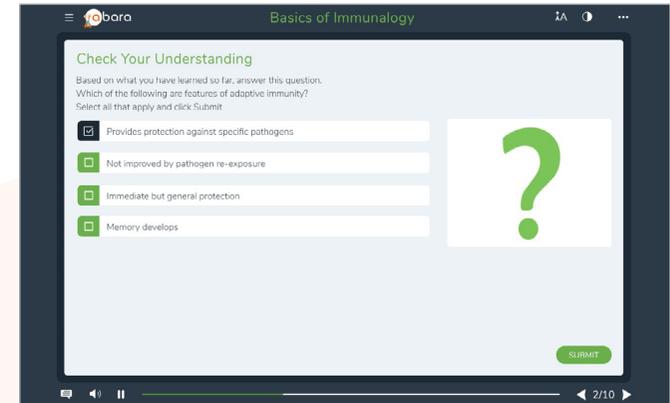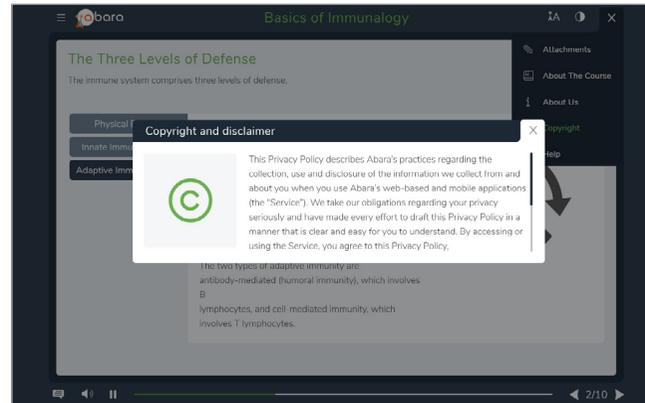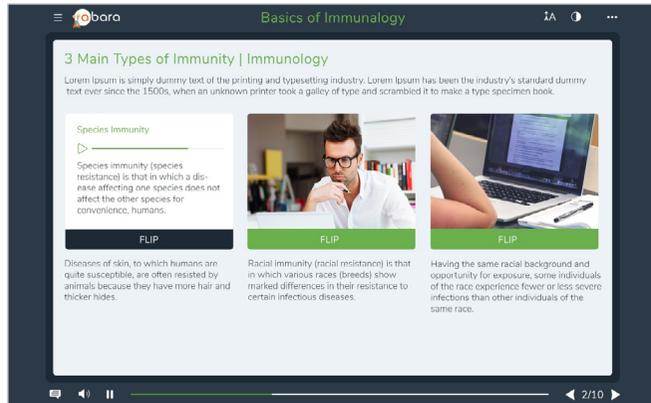
Authoring tools are simple to use when creating level 1 courses that do not require much technical knowledge. However, when the need to create complex eLearning courses arises, the best option is to outsource your eLearning to a **Professional eLearning Course Development Agency**.

» When training is complex, it requires either Level 2 or Level 3 eLearning. The best option is to go with an eLearning course development agency.

» eLearning that falls along the 2nd and 3rd levels are complex in nature. Generally comprising of multiple layers of higher instructional and visual design, animations, and interactivity. Hence, these courses need the presence of a good storyboard that acts as a blueprint. Moreover, increasingly complex courses require specialised technical knowledge to develop.

» Plan your eLearning initiatives for 2020 in advance. Identify all the level 1 courses that you can create in-house. Whereas, all your Level 2 and 3 courses should be outsourced to a professional, since developing these courses requires time and experience.

TOOL 4 — Mobile eLearning

Mobile learning is the fourth tool that should be a part of your training initiative for 2020.

Mobile learning is quickly becoming an unavoidable reality. In many cases, it is a great technique to get your training across to a demographic of learners who are always:

- Short of time
- Constantly moving
- Technology savvy
- Always online

When we talk about mobile learning, we need to ensure two things:

1. The presence of a good mobile-friendly LMS
2. The presence of great mobile-friendly eLearning content

Today, mobile phones are important. The number of global smartphone users is estimated to cross 2.5 billion by 2020.

Millennials Love Accessibility
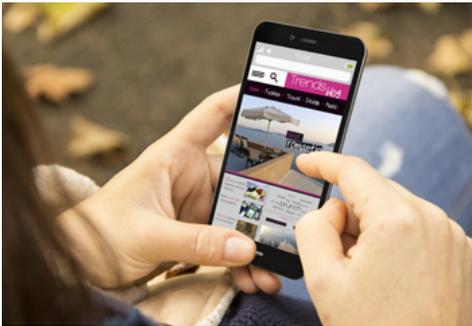
| Mobiles | Tablets | Laptops | PC |

One of the biggest reason is because millennials like accessibility. Given a choice, they would rather carry an easily accessible mobile phone over a slightly difficult to access laptop.

Research further revealed that 87% of the millennials always have a mobile phone by their side, which simply means—if training has to made accessible, mobile phones is the way.

Hence, if you're keen on keeping your learners engaged, providing them an opportunity to learn on a mobile-friendly LMS is the best way.

There are many benefits associated with using a mobile-friendly LMS:

- Learners can access training from their homes.
- They can access training when travelling (during public transport, or transportation that the company organizes such as buses or cabs).
- They can access it in between free periods of time.
- They can even train while at work.

TOOL 5 — Learning Path

This is where automation finally comes into play when planning your 2020.

Learning path is great automation feature that should definitely be a part of your LMS.

> " It is an efficient way to predefine your employees' growth opportunities within the organization by automating delivery of assessments and training modules along your employees' lifecycle. "

Basically, learning path allows you to create a set of predetermined actions that an employee needs to follow. This allows them to rise to the next best position and be ready for it.

To better understand this, we need to first understand what an employee lifecycle looks like.

Interview

Get the job

Training

Continue working

Identify a successor

Manage a team

Get promoted

Excel at work

This is how an employee lifecycle looks at most organizations.

Starting with an employee interview, it then passes through their growth phase, and finally ends with the employee leaving the organization at a senior position, preferably after finding their replacement.

This path from interview to exit includes a lot of learning, developing, and mastering of skills by an employee. Under normal circumstances, not all employees are capable of such great foresight where they successfully identify the skills needed to grow at an organization.

This is where learning path comes in. By programming the LMS, you can predefine the skills an employee needs to grow within the organization. Furthermore, the LMS also carries out regular assessments to ensure that the training carried out is understood by the employee before promoting them to the next level along their lifecycle.

The best part is that all of this is preset by the L&D or HR team based on the different career paths each job-role carries.

The employee logs in to the LMS. The LMS identifies them based on the job-role, and it automatically starts their learning journey.

Here is an example of a learning path created for a sales employee:

Get Onboarded

Get Assessed

Get Trained on Basics of Sales

Get Assessed

Get Trained on Advanced Sales

Get Assessed

Get Trained on Sales Leadership Roles

Get Assessed

Career Progression – combining training on-the-job experience and coaching

A learning path is a highly important feature to have in your bag for 2020 because:

- It shows your employees the way to succeed in your organization.
- It trains them based on their current responsibilities and where they lie along the employee life-cycle.
- It assesses the employee for future roles.
- It repeats the cycle if needed for a new job roll, i.e.: once a junior sales executive becomes a team lead, the learning path trains the employee on skills needed to be an effective leader.

TOOL 6 — Social Learning

One thing to keep in mind when planning your training activity is that 2020 is the year of social media channels and social media users.

Hence, the Social Learning feature is one of the best features to fully embrace in 2020.

What is Social Learning?

Social learning is the informal method of training your employees using an LMS. Learners/employees freely share their thoughts and findings on topics being currently discussed. These include links, images, videos, and articles. It facilitates a type of peer-to peer-learning, where a group of learners discuss and share information on the overarching topic.

All of what is being shared and discussed on the LMS's social learning feature can be monitored by the LMS administrator or anyone with the authority to moderate.

How does social learning work?

Social learning can work in any one or all of the following ways:
- Groups are created for learners to join. Learners join based on interests, departments, and geographies.
- Topic based forums are created where learners can share and discuss ideas either before or after the training.
- Learners share content approved by the administrators and moderators.
- L&D can act as subject facilitators by adding to the conversation.
- Learners can book personal chat sessions with subject matter experts.
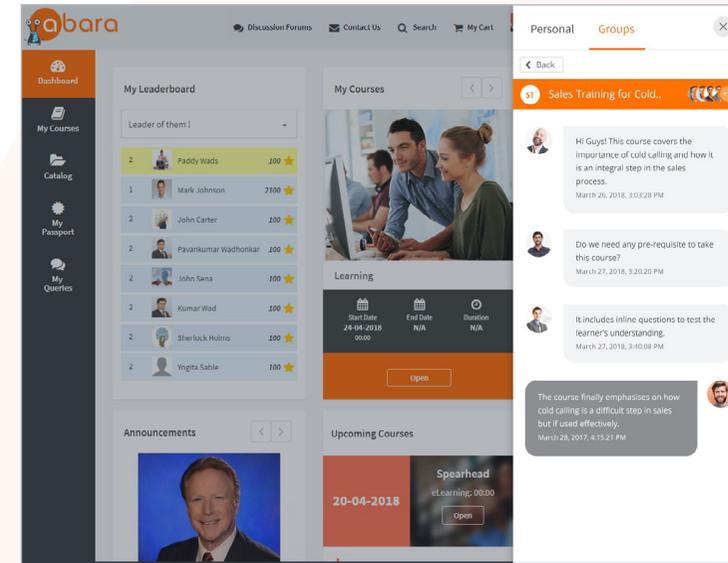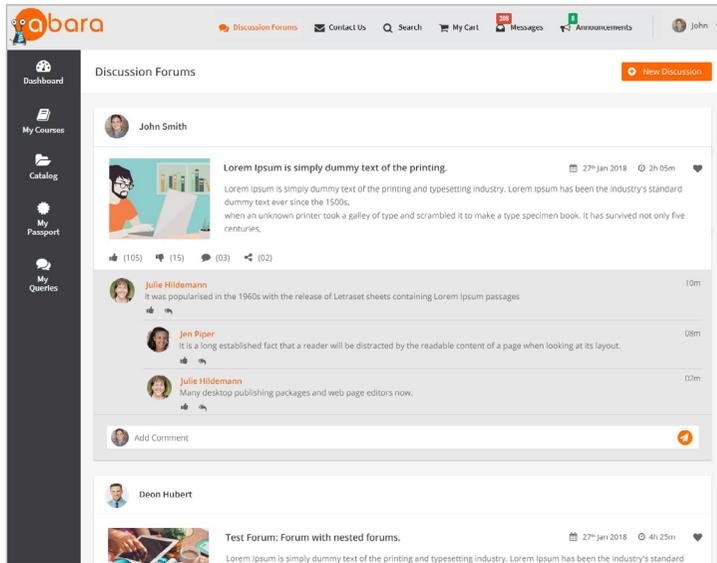
The benefits of social learning:
- Highly appealing
- Supports formal training in an informal manner
- Greater impact since collaboration and interaction peaks learner interests
- Millennials like social learning
- Learning is faster

TOOL 7 — Blended Learning

The process of combining traditional training with technology is called blended learning. It is an LMS feature that needs the presence of a physical trainer and some amount of learner control over the path, place, pace, and time. It is the perfect combination of person and machine which presents an optimum form of learning for employees/learners.

How does blended learning work?

To understand blended learning and how to optimally leverage it, let us analyse a real world scenario:

- **Type of Training:** Onboarding or induction training
- **Stages of Training:** Pre-training, during training, and post-training
- **Resources available:** Trainer, venue, and a learning management system

In this case, the need for training is to successfully onboard new employees before they start working. There are three resources at the L&D's disposal—trainer, venue, and LMS.

In order for the blended training approach to work, training has been divided into three distinct stages.

Let us start by analysing the three stages and how blended learning takes place as we enter each stage.

Pre-Training: During the pre-training stage, topics that are basic and can be covered without the need for a physical trainer can be uploaded on the LMS. Learners then access the content from the comfort of their homes before attending the actual training session itself.

The pre-training stage is handled by the LMS, before the learner comes for the actual classroom session.

The topics covered here are basic like company mission, founder's vision, best practices, and general guidelines.

During-Training: Once an employee accesses the LMS and completes their training on the basics of a given topic, they can now attend the actual classroom training session.

The during-training stage is handled by a physical trainer and is attended by fellow employees at a chosen venue.

Topics covered here are advanced like job rolls, how to perform certain tasks, what is expected of the employees, goal settings, and more.

Post-Training: Once the first two stages of training are completed, the training moves into its last phase where learners are assessed.

During this stage, training moves back onto the LMS.

Topics covered here are assessments designed to test the employees' knowledge and ensure they have retained as much of the training as possible.

It is in these three ways that training is blended. The first and last stages are carried out over the LMS, leaving the middle stage to be carried out by a physical trainer.

Advantages of blending learning:

Effective: Some people have a problem with studying in isolation. Blended learning ensures problems can be addressed in person with an instructor.

Efficient: Basics of the topic and assessments can be carried out over the LMS with the advanced training being carried out by the trainer.

Cost Sensitive: Costs of hiring a trainer and venue for extended periods of times is avoided.

Extended Communication: Post training communication with the trainer continues over the LMS.

PART 2 — WHAT DO MODERN LEARNERS LIKE AND DISLIKE?

When planning your training activity, understanding your learners' preferences is very important. This part of the plan is the fine-tuning stage where learners are provided with content designed to attract their attention.

To understand how training can be made more enjoyable and full of impact, let us study the modern learners' likes and dislikes.

What do modern learners like?

Modern learners like:

- Well packaged content
- Information covered in as many dimensions—video + text + audio
- Information that is packaged into small nuggets
- Always accessible
- Interactive

Why is this so?

This is because social media has changed the way modern learners consume content.

Today, learners consume content in the form of short videos, posts, shareable images, and memes.

What does this say about the modern learners?

This is a clear indicator of one thing—modern learners like consuming content that is packaged well. Preferably, in micro-learning formats, not long courses that take extended periods of time to complete in one-go.

Take a dense subject like banking and financial laws. Break it up into micro-topics. Wrap the content in a short module. This will encourage learners to start and finish the modules one by one instead of completing a long course in class or online.

This simply means relying on classroom training and on-the-job training to train your learners is not advisable. Our modern learner's methods of accepting knowledge have changed. They like knowledge delivered in the way social media does.

What do modern learners dislike?
- Dense content that is not presented well
- Inaccessibility of content
- Plain text
- Book and paper learning
- Inability to blend training

Planning your training for 2020 requires you to focus on the following:

Formalise your training: Use an advanced LMS.

Switch to eLearning courses in-house: Use an authoring tool or outsource to an expert.

Interest your learners: Show them why training and development are important.

Creating a learning journey for them: Show them the growth opportunities as they train and advance.
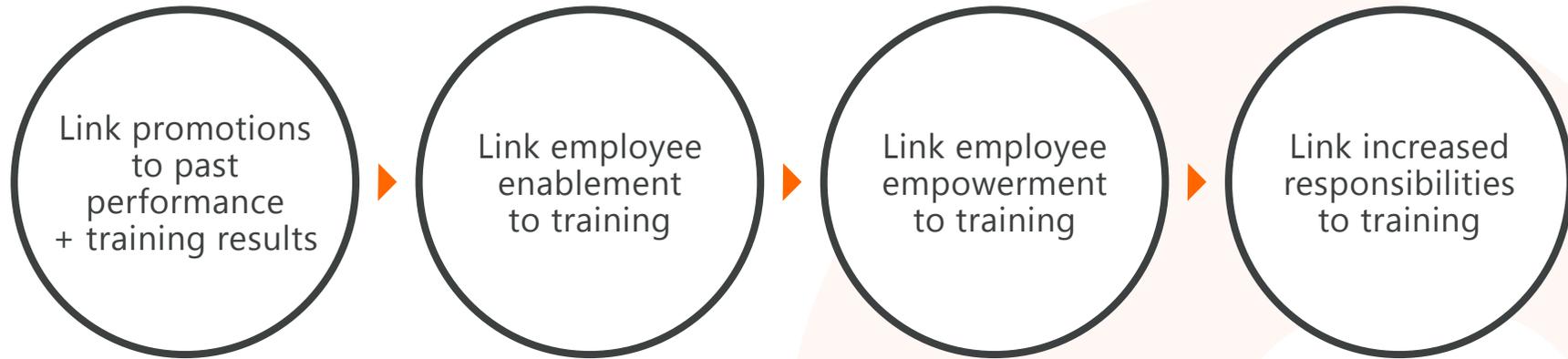
Create a social learning environment: Encourage learners to share their findings and opinions.

Blend your learning: Blend traditional and digital approaches to training.

Assess your outcomes: Use learner analysis to fine-tune your training.

How to successfully interest your learners?

Let them know why training is important. Give them a reason to train and develop their skills. Link the possibilities of promotion and increase in job responsibility to good performance and training.

Link promotions to past performance + training results ▶ Link employee enablement to training ▶ Link employee empowerment to training ▶ Link increased responsibilities to training

How to determine if your training worked?

Look for specific KPIs such as:

- Increased learner participation
- Decrease in attrition
- Increase in productivity
- Decrease in overhead costs
- Rising employee engagement rates
- Manager and stakeholder feedback

Things to remember when planning your 2020!

Bold moves: As an organization, you will have to focus on pushing for concreate moves and results. Losing out on making a change at the start of the year will only slow down your development rate for the rest of the year. So, as L&D teams and HR units, make sure your organization takes part in building a culture of learning and development.

Do not follow buzzwords: While putting in place a plan, make sure to not to get pulled in by the buzzwords that float around the internet which can hype a certain product for more than it is. Many times, your needs are quite straightforward. Simple solutions are the best options for your organization. After all, there is no harm in starting simple and moving up as your needs diversify to become complex.

Follow the agile concept: Start small and build as you grow. That is the concept of agile. Tackling your needs with time and selecting an eLearning model that can be scaled with your needs is the best way forward.
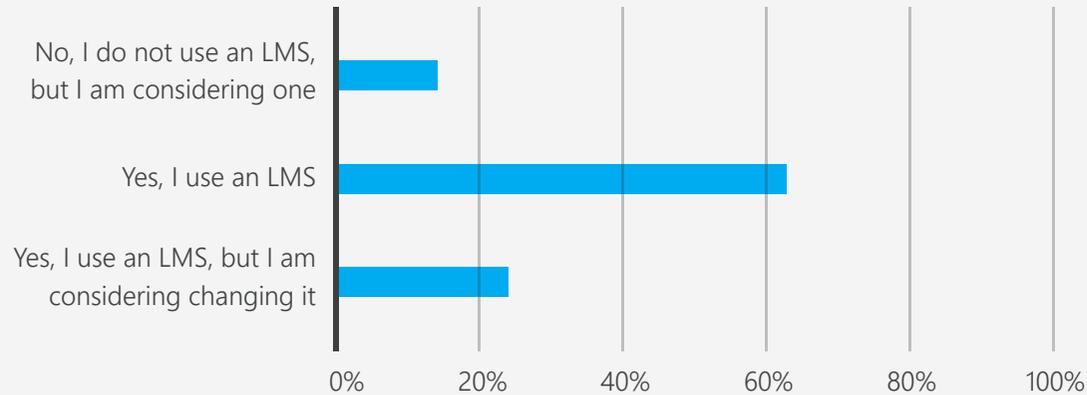
**We carried out a first-hand research on the practices followed by
HR and L&D professionals.
What we uncovered is interesting**

Question 1:

Are you currently using an LMS? And please describe your current status with regards to one.

Analysis:

- 12.5% professionals are still not using an LMS
- 62.5% professionals are using an LMS
- 25% are considering changing their LMS

This indicated one thing—37.5% of the HR and L&D professionals are either not using an LMS or are using an outdated system incapable of handling their training needs for 2020.
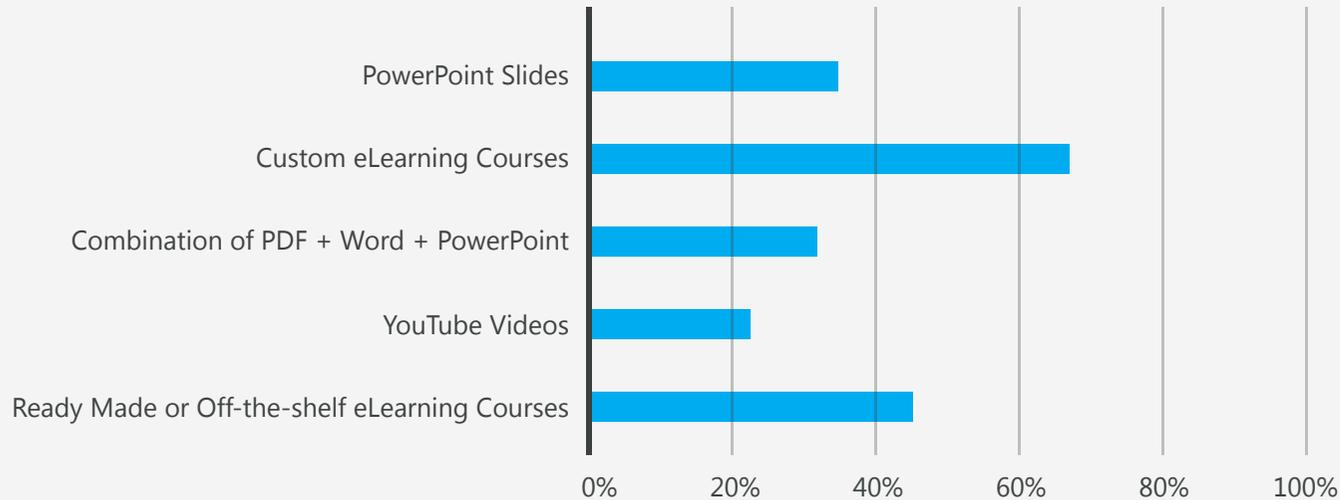
Takeaways

It is never too late or early to adopt an LMS that is 2020 ready. If your current LMS is unable to handle any of the functions as mentioned in the whitepaper, consider changing it.

It is advisable to migrate away from such LMS platform as they are only slowing down your training initiatives.

What type of training content do you store on your LMS?

Analysis:
Respondents were allowed to select multiple options for this question. From what we can tell—custom eLearning courses and off-the-shelf courses are used majorly.

However, it also shows a healthy mix of PowerPoint only, YouTube only, and modules consisting of PDF + Word + PowerPoint, which is a great way to start off with training on your own.

Takeaways
Having a healthy mix of content that is freely available over the internet along with those created by you is a good way to start your training initiative. Do mix in some courses that are custom-made and bought off-the-shelf as well for topics that are complex and need an immersive approach.

Does your LMS have Learning Path, Social Learning, and Blended Leaarning feature?
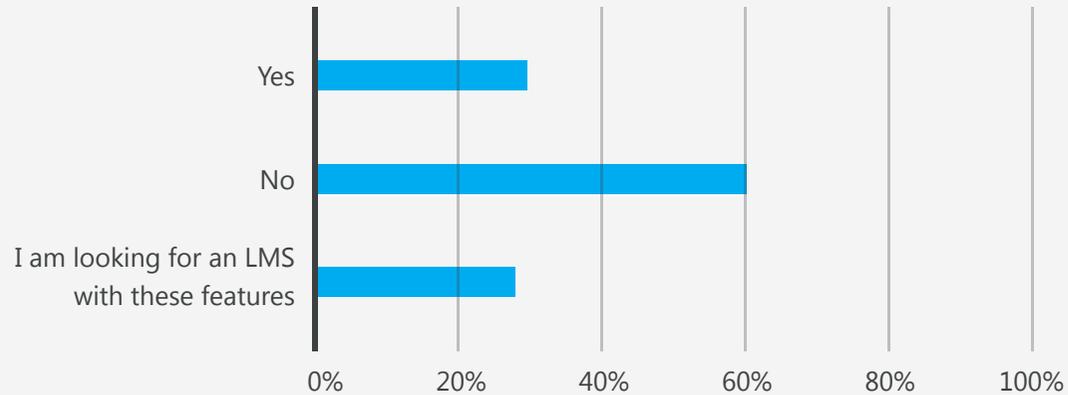

Analysis:

- 30% said Yes
- 60% said No
- 30% said they are looking to change

Takeaways

The tools and features mentioned within this whitepaper are common knowledge, available to one and all. Some features have successfully made it to many lists that talk about the best tools and features to have as a part of your eLearning. However, in spite of these tools commonly showing up in lists, many trainers, L&D professionals, HR, and corporate consultants are still reluctant to harness the power of these features. This is evident since 60% do not have these features as a part of the LMS, yet only 30% are considering getting a system with the said features.
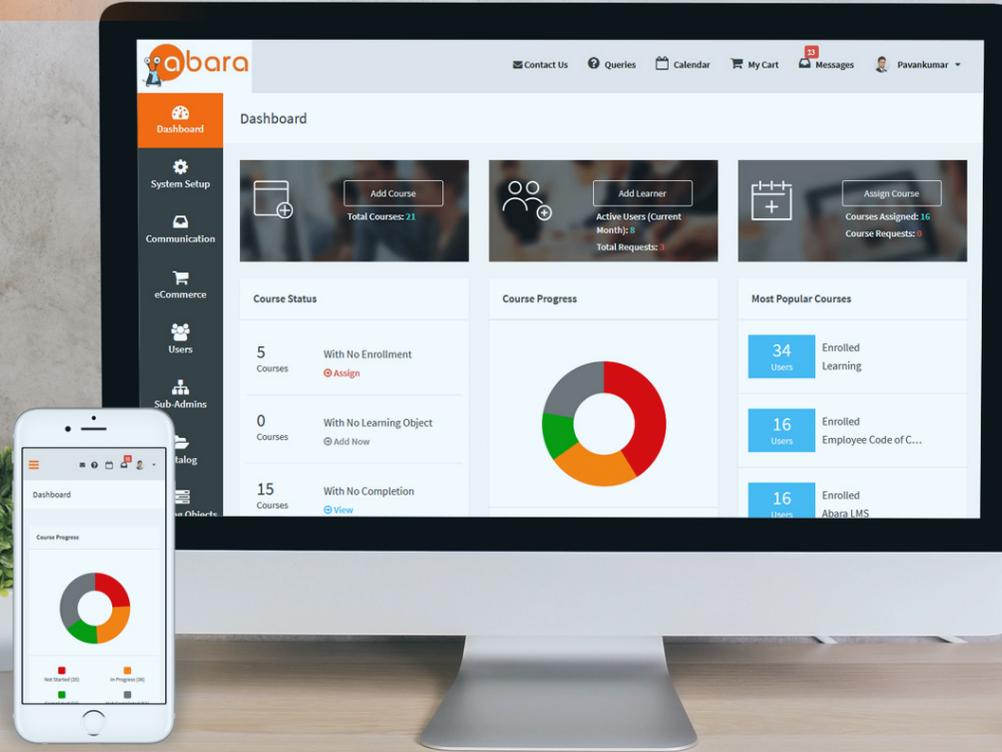
Abara LMS is a mobile-first system built for a dynamic corporate environment. Being mobile-first, Abara has two native apps accessible on Android and iOS ensuring your mobile teams like sales, distribution, and retail are capable of accessing the LMS at their convenience. Abara is perfectly suited for employee training, sales training, compliance training, customer training, and channel partner training. The multi-tenant feature allows Abara users to create individual login portals specific to departments and vendors. Abara LMS's UI and UX have been designed keeping aesthetics and easy navigation in mind. It consists of only the most important features, making it lean and navigable!