

# LEAN INTO LEARNING

**2020** ANNUAL LEARNING REPORT

sumtotal<sup>®</sup>

## A LOOK BACK AT 2020

Years from now, when we look back at 2020, every one of us will have stories to tell. A story of sacrifice. A story of compassion. If you are lucky, a story of hope.

You will also have a story of learning.

You've learned how to live differently. You have replaced handshakes and high fives with elbow bumps and jazz hands.

You've also learned how to work differently—from a distance, often masked.

You've even learned how to grow differently – more digitally and more self-directed.

We want you to know you haven't been alone. We built the SumTotal Learning and Talent Development platform to simplify even the most complex working environments. And even though we couldn't have predicted everything that has happened in 2020, we are proud of how our customers are using learning to adapt.

This Annual Learning Report is our collective story. Together, we will explore learning data from more than a million learners who work across thousands of organizations around the globe, dive into custom research, and share stories of triumph.

We hope this report will inspire you to use learning to thrive in a world of great uncertainty because we believe in you and the organizations you serve.





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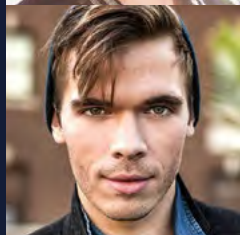
# **HINDSIGHT IS 2020**

How a disruptive year changed  
the face of learning.

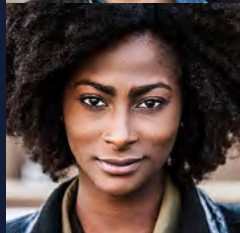
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than 25 years, Skillsoft has been on the leading edge of learning. We've trained more people than any other organization, evolving along with our customers as their needs have changed and grown. We've helped democratize learning, giving every person the opportunity to acquire new skills and go as far as their own curiosity and drive will allow. We've delivered powerful, accessible cloud-based tools and unmatched quality learning content. We thought we were ready for any and everything.

Then came 2020.

Businesses around the globe, across every industry, faced unparalleled change and disruption. Workforces went remote. Reskilling and upskilling became paramount to fill skills gaps and keep teams employed. New power skills — like agility, communication, resiliency, and adaptability — became essential as everyone adjusted to a new “normal” that was anything but. Digital transformation accelerated practically overnight — even for companies and verticals that were still years away from it. Human resources and talent development found themselves in the eye of a perfect storm.

Access to and encouragement of learning played a central role as employees and employers alike reacted to the pandemic, an uncertain economy, and worldwide social reform in real-time. Consumption of learning increased exponentially and new topics emerged as not just popular, but mission-critical.

The good news for learners, learning professionals, and the learning industry is that regardless of when and how we come out of the current situation, work has changed irrevocably. Personal flexibility and autonomy won't go away. Skills will remain more important than traditional roles. Digital transformation isn't some far-off goal; it's here and it's now. And, learning will continue to play a pivotal role in building a future-fit workforce ready to respond to what's next — whatever “next” looks like.



# SECTION I **THE STATE OF LEARNING**

Where digital technology  
meets human drive





## WHY DOES LEARNING MATTER?

Essayist, lecturer, poet, and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “Life is a journey, not a destination.” We agree. And, what makes that journey so interesting, rich, and valuable? Learning.

Any learning professional will tell you there are tangible, measurable reasons to pursue learning. An individual might be working toward an advanced degree or certification, or fulfilling a job requirement. An organization might need to fill a skills gap in order to develop new products and services, or succeed in a more competitive market.

But, there’s more to it.

Learning used to be a fairly simple one-way equation. Trainers taught and trainees learned. But, in today’s faster paced, more agile world, the most successful people are training themselves. They’re proactively looking for ways to strengthen their current capabilities and add new ones, to keep up with evolving technologies, to build their own leadership skills.

While most roles require a specific set of competencies, these change over time. In fact, it’s virtually impossible to predict what skills will be in-demand ten, fifteen, or twenty years from now. According to the World Economic Forum, 65% of children entering primary school will end up in jobs that don’t have a name yet. That’s why learning shouldn’t be a point-in-time exercise with a definitive beginning, middle, and end. Instead, like Emerson, we must think of learning as a journey. With each new fact, skill, or theory a person acquires, they’re opening doors to greater possibilities. When an organization commits to continuous learning, it’s giving its workforce permission to grow.

Organizations are flatter than they’ve ever been. Workers are given more autonomy, more opportunities to make decisions all the time. And, more and more companies are addressing this with learning.

Learning can be customized to specific roles and individualized for specific learners and their preferred style and speed of learning. Learners, given the opportunity to set their own career objectives and pursue directly related learning, are more motivated, which certainly benefits the organization. As does a company culture that democratizes learning and opportunities for advancement.

## LEARNING IS A MINDSET

Many people pursue learning for a tangible reason: a degree, diploma, certification, or job requirement. But, with a shift in mindset, learning can be an ongoing and incrementally rewarding journey. Rather than a finite accomplishment, it can be part of and integral to continued growth.

Just as individual learners are shifting their mindset, so are organizations.

Skills are fast becoming fluid. Even the most specific capabilities in areas like technology and compliance are constantly changing. Some of today’s most sought after competencies — like search engine optimization, big data analysis, chatbot programming, and more — didn’t exist ten or twenty years ago.



According to the World Economic Forum, 65% of children entering primary school will end up in jobs that don’t even have a name yet.





That's why the focus is evolving from *what* to learn, to *how* to learn.

The question isn't just what specific role can I prepare for? But, how can I shift my thinking so I'm ready and able to succeed in whatever roles emerge ahead? Leaders, learners, and organizations are experiencing the value of power skills that cross disciplines, like agility, adaptability, and resilience.

In this way, organizations build a future-ready workforce with a solid foundation of evergreen competencies and a willingness to learn specific skills as they evolve. There are great benefits to be realized when you encourage people to continually learn; people with a lifelong learning mindset are immensely valuable as problem solvers and troubleshooters.

## ORGANIZATIONS ARE MAKING A COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

Training, an important subset of learning, is often looked at as a “need to have.” But, *Learning*, a commitment to continual growth, is a “great to have.”

Learning is providing employees with new opportunities to increase their skill set, keep it up to date, and keep themselves marketable. They can improve their situation and advance in their career. And, when an entire team shares this attitude, the results are exponentially positive.

The most successful enterprises don't think of learning as a discrete function, an adjunct of human resources, or a once-a-year rudimentary requirement. Instead, they embrace learning for the integrated and pivotal role it plays.

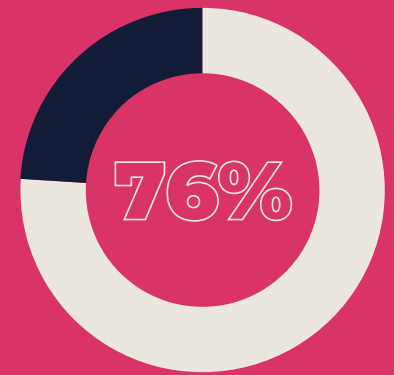
Giving employees access to continual learning makes an organization a more positive place. And, that affects the entire ecosystem of the organization, inside and out. When a company invests in the growth of its employees, they feel valued and rewarded. And, that feeling is conveyed to and shared by customers.

## BUT LEARNERS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SPEND ON LEARNING

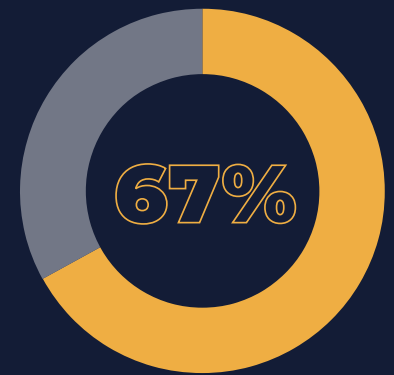
More and more businesses of every size are recognizing — and investing in — the value of learning. Yet employees too often struggle to find time for learning on the job.

Regardless of work level or job function, learners do not have a significant amount of time to spend on learning each week. And, entry-level employees, who arguably need the most support, show the least interest and have the least amount of available time to spend on learning.

There's good news. Employees want to learn and those who are provided curated learning journeys are eager to continue their path of skills development.



**76% WHO PARTICIPATED IN A LEARNING JOURNEY WANTED MORE OPPORTUNITIES**



**67% OF LEARNERS SPEND LESS THAN 5 HOURS PER WEEK LEARNING**

## THE NEUROSCIENCE OF LEARNING

The adoption of learning has grown, and so too has the desire for learning that is smarter and faster.

As leaders in our industry, Skillsoft has invested in understanding exactly how the brain processes and retains information to improve an employee's performance. This science-based understanding of retention and application informs course design and development. This is why we partnered with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Office of Digital Learning and Accenture to embark on an extensive research initiative into crucial aspects of the science of learning.

Our research partnership with MIT and Accenture unlocks which instructional strategies drive engagement and retention in a video-based instructional experience. Some of the experiments involved in our research included:

- **Assessing the impact of scenario-based versus instructor-led video content on recall**
- **Analyzing the impact of presenting material to the learner in advance of the video, so the learner understands the gap in their existing knowledge**
- **Reviewing the impact of interpolative testing on quizzes within the videos to see how it influences interest and retention**
- **Assessing the learner's mindset, in order to understand whether people with a growth mindset learn better**

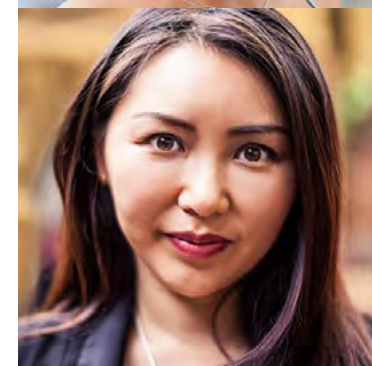
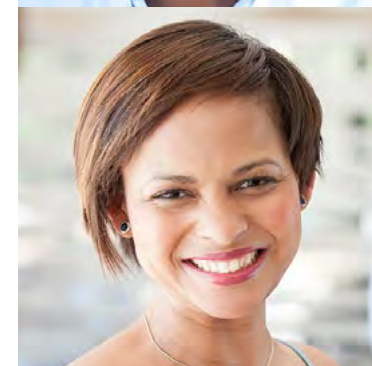
## LEARNERS CRAVE A STORY

The first phase demonstrated that the treatment and design of the video content materially influenced the expressed level of engagement by the learner. Delivering an instructor or expert lecture on camera, interspersed with bulleted concepts, is the least engaging way to present critical business skills and leadership content. The findings suggested that learners crave:

- **Storylines**
- **Narratives**
- **Some degree of self-directed, progressive disclosure of concepts**

## THE POWER OF SCENARIOS

When surveyed, employees rated the scenario-based course as markedly more interesting than the instructor-led course. More importantly, employees who watched the scenario-based video performed significantly better on post-assessments than those who watched the baseline instructor-led video.



The study also used an electroencephalogram (EEG) to measure electrical activity in the brain. Since the brain communicates via electric signals, measuring this activity is an insightful measure of engagement and focus. Our EEG readings reinforced the employee reported findings and post-instruction tests.

Analysis of the EEG results illustrated patterns that showed the pre-frontal cortex of the brain was most active in the scenario training. This insight is particularly important for behavioral training, including leadership courses.

This section of the brain is critical for:

- **Complex cognitive behavior**
- **Personality expression**
- **Decision-making**
- **Moderating social behavior**

Employees were significantly more attentive and focused during the process of watching the scenario relative to watching the instructor-led video.

Learning has to start somewhere, but it never needs to end. Developing programs that combine methods supported by brain-science and focus in on subjects that are truly of interest to teams is the future of learning.

## LEARNER SEARCHES PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THEIR INTERESTS

For today’s worker, time is of the essence. They’re searching for topics geared towards their needs. These are the top 20 search terms worldwide:

#1 PYTHON	#11 COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE
#2 EXCEL	#12 PROJECT MANAGEMENT
#3 AZURE	#13 LEADERSHIP
#4 JAVA	#14 PMP
#5 AGILE	#15 CISSP
#6 AWS	#16 SIX SIGMA
#7 SQL	#17 TABLEAU
#8 POWERBI	#18 DIVERSITY
#9 ITIL	#19 DEVOPS
#10 EXPERT INSIGHTS	#20 SCRUM



Employees were significantly more attentive and focused during the process of watching the scenario relative to watching the instructor-led video.





## GUIDED JOURNEYS NURTURE LEARNERS

Employees often want to develop expertise in a particular area, but don't know what to learn first or how to take themselves from one level to the next. Skillsoft is dedicated to helping these learners reach their goal and nurture their competitive edge — without relying on assistance from busy managers. Our Aspire Journeys provide sequenced learning paths that build on current skill sets while guiding through essential learning toward specific goals.

Top journeys include:

<b>#1</b> LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CORE JOURNEY
<b>#2</b> PYTHON NOVICE TO PYTHONISTA
<b>#3</b> DATA ANALYST TO DATA SCIENTIST
<b>#4</b> APPLICATION DEV. TO BLOCKCHAIN SOLUTIONS ARCHITECT

## LEARNERS LOVE POSITIVE VALIDATION

Digital badges, which can be posted on social media channels and resumes, motivate and reward learners in a way that's portable, shareable, and verifiable. The top 20 Skillsoft Digital Badges earned worldwide are:

<b>#1</b> CLOUD COMPUTING FUNDAMENTALS: INTRODUCTION	<b>#11</b> DEVELOPING THE PRODUCT & SPRINT BACKLOGS
<b>#2</b> AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT — SCRUM	<b>#12</b> RELEASE & SPRINT PLANNING
<b>#3</b> THE LANGUAGE OF DEVOPS: DEVOPS TOOLS & PROCESSES	<b>#13</b> TRUST BUILDING THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
<b>#4</b> JENKINS FOR DEVOPS: JENKINS CONFIGURATION FOR DEVOPS	<b>#14</b> BECOME A GREAT LISTENER
<b>#5</b> SOFTWARE DATA ANALYSIS: PROJECT MANAGEMENT METRICS	<b>#15</b> THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION
<b>#6</b> AGILE TEST-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT	<b>#16</b> MAKING AN IMPACT WITH NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION
<b>#7</b> USING KANBAN IN IT & SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT	<b>#17</b> CHOOSING THE RIGHT INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION METHOD
<b>#8</b> SOFTWARE TESTING FOR DEVOPS: DEVOPS TEST TOOLS	<b>#18</b> CONTRIBUTING AS A VIRTUAL TEAM MEMBER
<b>#9</b> USING DOCKER FOR DEVOPS: INTRODUCTION TO DOCKER	<b>#19</b> DO WE HAVE A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE?
<b>#10</b> COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE	<b>#20</b> CAPTURING THE ATTENTION OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES



## CASE STUDY

# INVESTING IN A TEAM PAYS OFF



PSAV, a global leader in event experiences, grew over three times its original size and had more than 14,000 skilled professionals spread across 2,100 global locations. Since learning and development operated independently at different locations, and much of it was instructor-led, unifying and standardizing the learning culture was essential to create a program that elevates talent and differentiates the company within its industry.

They planned to build a program that recognized that team members are the essence of the company brand. So *Focus on You* was developed to complement their employees career journeys. The program is an integrated talent management strategy that spans culture, rewards, development, and career, and is accessible for all staff globally.

The program focused on the company's core values. The development piece has five academies and 10,000+ new or updated learning activities. The career portion is powered by a skill set matrix with a comprehensive listing of the skills needed for every role. Role-based development guides lay out training plans organized for each employee. They include certifications for many disciplines, all linked to a career-pathing tool for employees to find the training aligning with career aspirations. Finally, the rewards program focuses on the pay, benefits, and well-being of the employees.



Many of PSAV's employees wanted to acquire certifications for their resume, but there was no governance over certifications. PSAV worked to build certification programs validated externally, so when, for example, a PSAV technician has a certification, it is industry-recognized. These certifications are public in the labor scheduling tool customers use, so when they select a person with a certification, it reinforces its importance.

The program has had outstanding results. PSAV has seen the learning culture become more proactive and make an impact on its customers, evidenced by exceptional increases in NPS scores from 9.4 to 9.7. There has been a 3.5x increase in the average number of training hours per person and 2,000 team members selected an aspirational job title in the system within 90 days.



"Technical people like to claim certification on their resumes, but no one had really defined what that was. With our certification platform, we've led our industry to define and create skill set matrices and include the external validation that was missing."

**DEREK BLAKE**  
DIVISIONAL VICE PRESIDENT,  
GLOBAL LEARNING &  
DEVELOPMENT



SECTION II

# 2020 AND THE NEW NORMAL

And the not so normal





## 2020 WAS DIFFERENT

2020 was different. Historically, we've never seen such acute disruption at the scale and pace that we've lived through this year. Massive, dramatic change hit all of us across the globe suddenly and with little warning. In its wake, people everywhere had the courage to learn new ways of working.

Employees learned how to work differently. From a distance, on video, and with fewer brick and mortar walls holding teams together.

They also learned how to grow differently — more digitally and more self-directed.

## WHEN A HEALTH CRISIS BECAME A BUSINESS CHALLENGE

To refer to the year 2020 as disruptive is an understatement of epic proportion. We experienced a once-in-a-century global pandemic, and millions of people around the world had to learn to work, manage, and operate remotely, practically overnight. The business world quickly named this “the new normal” although there was nothing remotely normal about it.

The learning industry responded, moving fast, developing new programs for customers so they could redefine collaboration, choose the right tool sets, and help their teams adjust to a new reality of work/life balance. Most workers weren't aware of the potential safety and ethical risks in a home office setting. So, compliance professionals had to recognize and create new policies around workstation design, inappropriate personal items on videoconferences, use of home devices for business, security of company information, and more.

Power skills like agility, resilience, innovation, communication, and adaptability became more important than ever. As did each contributor's ability and willingness to manage his or her own time, work, and learning.

## UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING FOR ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

The pandemic wasn't the only learning driver in 2020. COVID-19 resulted in dramatic economic fallout for many industries. Some organizations — leveraging digital learning — successfully reskilled staff for changing roles, avoiding layoffs and furloughs.

Skillsoft Executive Chairman Ron Hovsepian recently told *The Wall Street Journal*, “The rate and pace of learning that's occurring now is just extraordinary. We're going to stay committed to our customers' goals and their learners' needs. We're going to help these companies navigate digital transformation, but always with a humancentric approach.”



Power skills like agility, resilience, innovation, communication, and adaptability became more important than ever.





## PANDEMIC RESPONSE TOPICS SURGED IN MARCH AND APRIL

As the workforce transitioned to operating remotely, widespread training was needed to help workers, many of whom had never worked from home before, build the skills and learn the technologies needed to go virtual. Learning how to collaborate remotely, stay organized, and manage stress became paramount, as demonstrated by massive spikes in course completions on these topics.

**189x**

MICROSOFT TEAMS:  
COMMUNICATING VIA THE APP



**56x**

FACING VIRTUAL  
TEAM CHALLENGES



**79x**

MICROSOFT TEAMS: GETTING  
TO KNOW THE APPLICATION



**8.2x**

ORGANIZE YOUR PHYSICAL  
AND DIGITAL WORKSPACE



**62x**

EXPLORING VIRTUAL  
COLLABORATION



**7.3x**

THE ART OF STAYING  
FOCUSED







## LEARNERS EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Communication is critical in the changing work environment. Learning to improve communication internally and externally is growing more important with courses on emotional intelligence and crafting a “business story” rising.

**278x**  
GROWTH IN “DEVELOPING  
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE”



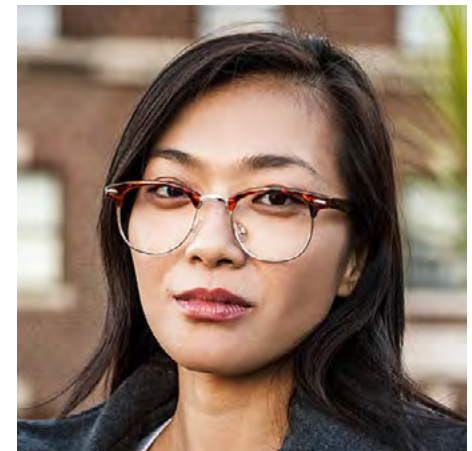
**4x**  
“TRUST BUILDING THROUGH  
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION”



**5.5x**  
GROWTH IN “ENCOURAGING TEAM  
COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION”



**6**  
OF THE TOP SKILLSOFT DIGITAL BADGES  
FOCUSED ON COMMUNICATION



“Almost everything else can stop, but what we don’t stop is the very thing that is going to make us better.”

**MEREDITH TAGHI**  
VP OF GROUP  
LEARNING, TALENT AND  
HR PLATFORMS  
DHL





# LEARNERS DRAMATICALLY SHIFTED COURSE AFTER COVID SURGED


Skillsoft analyzed the learning behavior of 1.1 million unique learners between January 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020. These are the top courses both before and after people started working from home en masse.

PRE-SURGE	POST-SURGE
#1 MOVING TO THE CLOUD	#1 CONTRIBUTING AS A VIRTUAL TEAM MEMBER
#2 CLOUD COMPUTING FUNDAMENTALS: INTRODUCTION	#2 COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE
#3 ALIGNING GOALS AND PRIORITIES TO MANAGE TIME	#3 EXCEL OFFICE 365: GETTING STARTED
#4 POLISHING YOUR SKILLS FOR EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE	#4 BECOME A GREAT LISTENER
#5 MAXIMIZE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY BY MANAGING TIME AND TASKS	#5 ALIGNING GOALS AND PRIORITIES TO MANAGE TIME
#6 COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH CUSTOMERS	#6 MAXIMIZE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY BY MANAGING TIME AND TASKS
#7 CLOUD SERVICE MODELS & BENEFITS AND ISSUES	#7 ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TEAMS
#8 INTERACTING WITH CUSTOMERS	#8 THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION
#9 COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE	#9 COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH CUSTOMERS
#10 CLOUD COMPUTING FUNDAMENTALS: CONSIDERATIONS	#10 INTERACTING WITH CUSTOMERS
#11 INTRODUCTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	#11 WRITING EFFECTIVE E-MAILS AND INSTANT MESSAGES
#12 THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION	#12 CONTROLLING CONFLICT, STRESS, AND TIME IN CUSTOMER SERVICE



# COMPLETED COURSES PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS

The most in-demand business and leadership courses centered on communications and working in a virtual environment. The top technology and development courses were in Agile and DevOps. New regulations around worker safety spawned interest in training for COVID-19 prevention and best practices.



**BUSINESS SKILLS**

- #1 BECOME A GREAT LISTENER
- #2 COMMUNICATING WITH CONFIDENCE
- #3 TRUST BUILDING THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
- #4 THE ART AND SCIENCE OF COMMUNICATION
- #5 MAKING AN IMPACT WITH NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
- #6 CONTRIBUTING AS A VIRTUAL TEAM MEMBER
- #7 MICROSOFT TEAMS: COMMUNICATING VIA THE APP
- #8 CHOOSING THE RIGHT INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
- #9 MAXIMIZE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY BY MANAGING TIME AND TASKS
- #10 DO WE HAVE A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE?



**DIGITAL RESILIENCE**

- #1 CONTRIBUTING AS A VIRTUAL TEAM MEMBER
- #2 MICROSOFT TEAMS: COMMUNICATING VIA THE APP
- #3 ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL TEAMS
- #4 DEVELOPING A GROWTH MIND-SET
- #5 FORGING AHEAD WITH PERSEVERANCE AND RESILIENCE
- #6 TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND MANAGE YOUR STRESS
- #7 ACHIEVE PRODUCTIVITY IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE
- #8 MANAGING PRESSURE AND STRESS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR PERFORMANCE
- #9 ALIGNING GOALS AND PRIORITIES TO MANAGE TIME
- #10 YOUR ROLE IN WORKPLACE DIVERSITY



“What happened with COVID-19 was a perfect storm for FM Global. But necessity is the mother of invention. And invent, we did.”

**KAREN FREEDMAN**  
**VICE PRESIDENT,**  
**ENTERPRISE LEARNING**  
**FM GLOBAL**







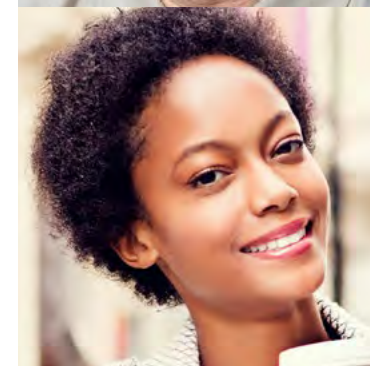
## TECH AND DEV

- #1 CLOUD COMPUTING FUNDAMENTALS: INTRODUCTION
- #2 AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT — SCRUM
- #3 THE LANGUAGE OF DEVOPS: DEVOPS TOOLS & PROCESSES
- #4 JENKINS FOR DEVOPS: JENKINS CONFIGURATION FOR DEVOPS
- #5 AGILE TEST-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT
- #6 SOFTWARE DATA ANALYSIS: PROJECT MANAGEMENT METRICS
- #7 SOFTWARE TESTING FOR DEVOPS: DEVOPS TEST TOOLS
- #8 USING DOCKER FOR DEVOPS: INTRODUCTION TO
- #9 USING KANBAN IN IT AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT
- #10 SOLID & GRASP



## COMPLIANCE

- #1 SAFETY SHORT: CORONAVIRUSES AND COVID-19
- #2 LEADING THE WAY: 2020 ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE TRAINING
- #3 RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE 2020
- #4 WORKPLACE HARASSMENT PREVENTION FOR EMPLOYEES
- #5 COVID-19 TEAM MEMBER TRAINING — RETURN TO THE OFFICE
- #6 BLOODBORNE PATHOGEN AWARENESS 2.0
- #7 GLOBAL BUSINESS ETHICS
- #8 EU GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION
- #9 GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY BASICS
- #10 HARASSMENT PREVENTION FOR US EMPLOYEES





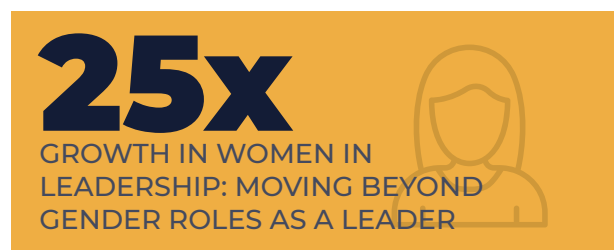
## A CALL FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

As the business world was still responding to COVID-19, there emerged a pervasive social justice movement that argued for overdue systemic change and genuine equity for disenfranchised communities. Following the tragic murder of George Floyd in the United States and monumental cultural awakening that followed, there's been immense focus — at both the individual and corporate levels — on how to be a better ally and use privilege to support diversity in the workplace.

Skillsoft felt a sense of urgency to provide guidance to our own internal community as well as to our valued stakeholders and partners. We created a Leadercamp series, added anti-bias training to our Bootcamps, launched a series of Skillsoft 360 Reports, and took a critical look at the DEI training and learning in our content library.

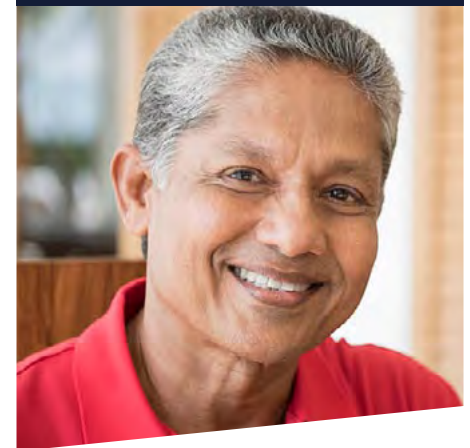
And customers and their learners responded with exponential increases in consumption.

There is no doubt that 2020 will be remembered as a year of unprecedented disruption. But, the hope was (and is) that it can also be remembered as a year of long overdue — and lasting — social, cultural, organizational change and evolution.



**"It's not about telling people what to say or not to say. We start with where you are and build forward based on your unfiltered worldview."**

**LA'WANA HARRIS,  
DEI EXECUTIVE COACH  
AND AUTHOR**





## CASE STUDY

# ADOPTING DIGITAL LEARNING — OVERNIGHT

Hitachi Vantara

When Hitachi Vantara and Hitachi Consulting merged, the talent development team had to determine how to create a common learning culture and gain adoption for blended learning and on-demand training by motivated learners who were seeking opportunities to progress in their careers.

Their initial strategy was a slow integration; to continue supporting external training while encouraging internally provided blended programs and on-demand learning through an online platform. COVID-19 changed everything. This global pandemic not only eliminated in-person training for the foreseeable future, leaving only on-demand and live virtual training options, but it also generated new training and learning needs overnight. In a matter of days, “Business Continuity” jumped to the top of everyone’s radar and courses on working remotely, leading remotely, work-life balance, stress management, and even understanding the COVID-19 virus were now in high demand. What was to be a gradual progression, quickly became an imminent need.

The Talent Development team quickly responded to this new reality by refocusing its internal marketing to emphasize the learning content most relevant to the changing workplace and business landscape. With no in-person classroom opportunities available, they were able to garner attention for the



benefits of the eLearning and live virtual delivery methods. What may have been met with resistance a few months earlier was met with open arms. Just as the world quickly adapted to Zoom and Webex meetings, there was a clear and compelling reason to adopt e-learning platforms. Six months later, these learning methods have been widely adopted and with increasing adoption and engagement energy and interest, even from groups and individuals from whom they anticipated resistance.

This challenging time provides a compelling case for on-demand, blended, and virtual instructor-led training. While they anticipate returning to some in-person training once it is safe to do so, there is a new level of buy-in to alternatives.



**“We need people to think about learning differently — the world and our workplaces have changed.”**

**KARIN LEVITT  
DIRECTOR OF TALENT  
DEVELOPMENT**

## CASE STUDY

# TRANSFORMING SKILL SETS



As one of the largest IT and business consulting services firms on the globe, CGI's culture is built on the shared dream "to create an environment in which we enjoy working together and, as owners, contribute to building a company we can be proud of."

When it comes to learning, CGI believes in two things:

- 1. Each member is responsible for their own career development.**
- 2. The organization is responsible for supporting its members' career development.**

No time was the second pillar more critical than in the midst of a pandemic. With 85 percent of its staff deployed on client projects to provide IT consulting services at any given time, COVID-19 caused a level of disruption CGI has never experienced.

When a number of those jobs were temporarily impacted due to COVID-19, it launched CGI Academia, a companywide online learning program powered by Skillsoft's Percipio. This platform enabled CGI to provide a robust training plan of courses accessible from home via telework to advance the skill sets of members and increase its value to clients.



Since the end of April, more than 44,000 of CGI's 77,500 employees around the world have leveraged CGI Academia, spending 278,865 total hours on the platform, and earning 145,000 digital badges and counting. With completed topics such as AI, agile software development, and machine learning, CGI focused on important content to reskill, upskill, and futureproof its members at an absolutely critical time.



"Within the first three months of launching CGI Academia, we are already seeing a transformation across the business as skill development creates tangible value for our global team members and customers alike."

**HELEN SUSSEX**  
**DIRECTOR GLOBAL LEARNING**  
**DESIGN AND CREATION**



# A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Like many organizations, Skillsoft had to make changes in 2020 — especially in the area of our live events. Over ten weeks, an entire team worked — sometimes day and night — to reinvent our annual customer conference from top to bottom. It became a free, 24-hour, global, digital experience.

*Perspectives 2020* featured more than a hundred speakers in keynotes, case studies, and head-to-head debates. There were product demos and regional business continuity panels. There were music and yoga breaks and ample opportunities to ask questions, suggest solutions, and participate in what turned into a rich and dynamic conversation about everything from personal development to diversity and inclusion training, and from leading in challenging times to lively discussions on who owns the skilling agenda.

Perspectives 2020 wasn't just about teaching people new skills; it was about our collective well-being. More than 14,000 people joined us in real-time with thousands more attending on demand.

"These are extraordinary times, but it's at these very moments that people want to know they can rely on the ordinary. There is tremendous comfort in knowing that things can and will carry on, albeit in a reimagined way."

**MICHELLE BOOCKOFF-BAJDEK**  
CMO  
SKILLSOFT



SECTION III

# THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

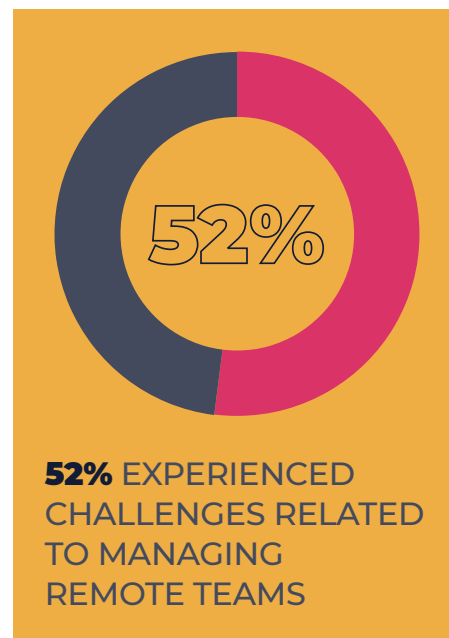
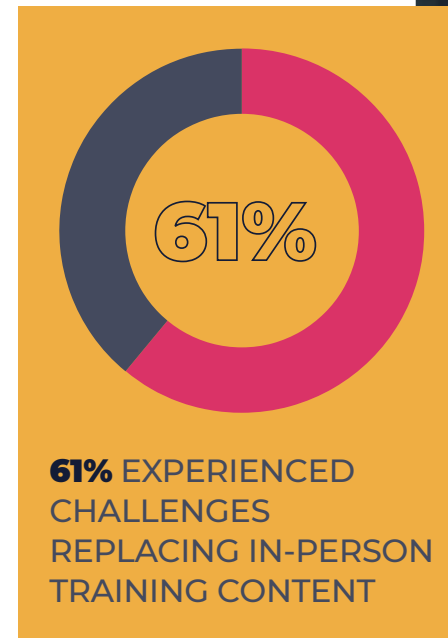
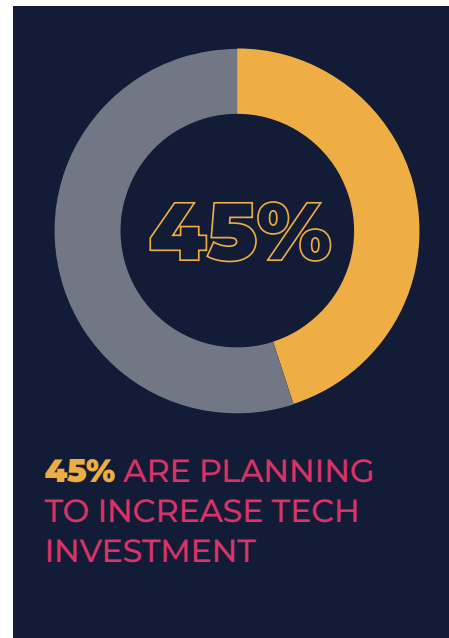
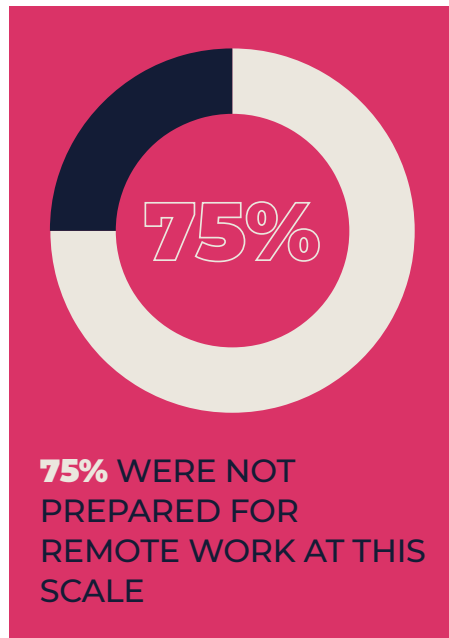
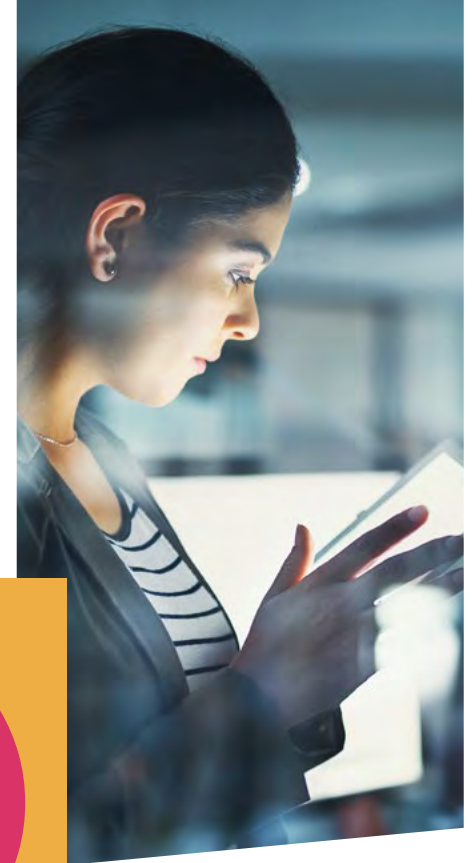
is the future of business



## BUSINESS WON'T GO BACK TO “BUSINESS AS USUAL”

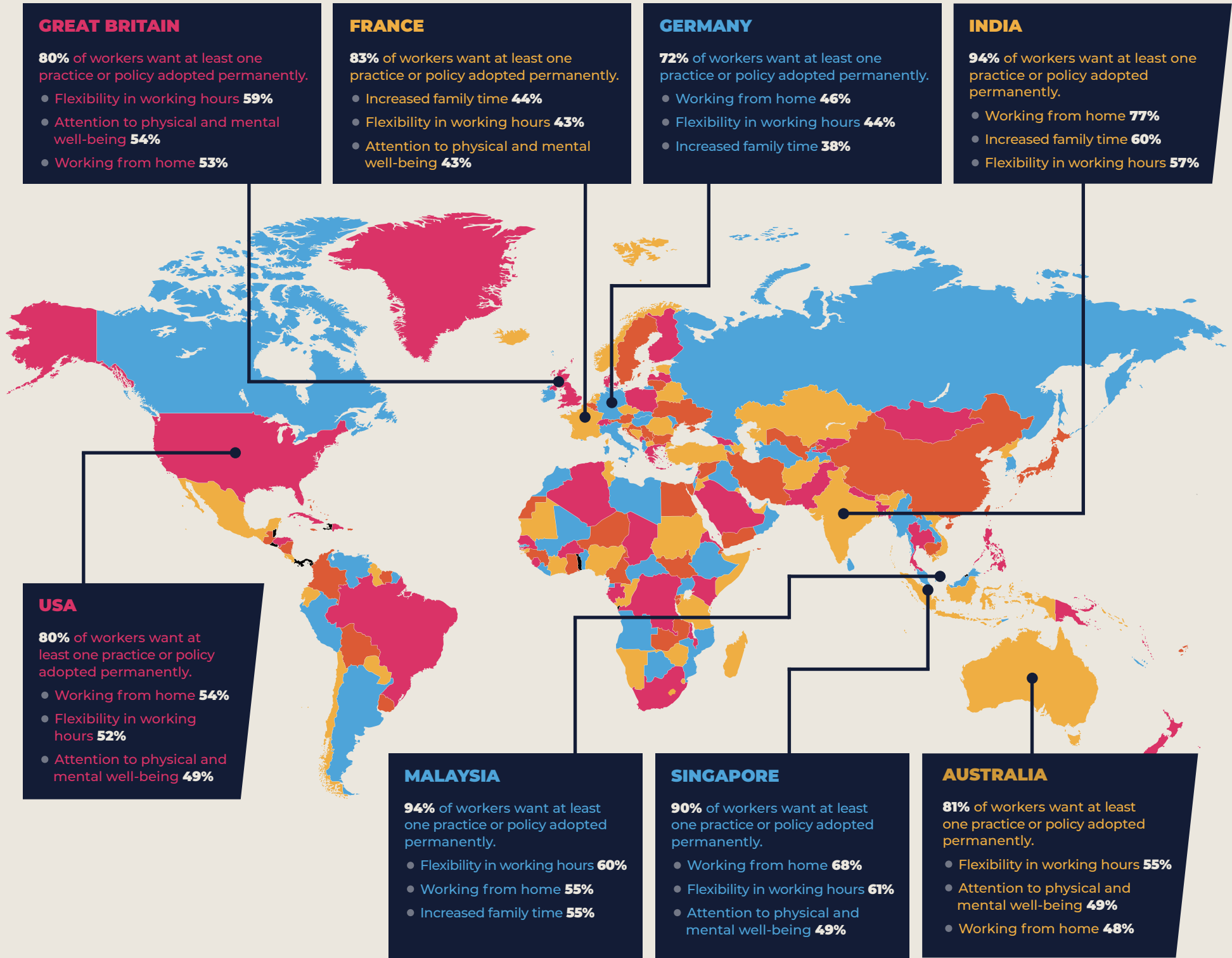
Our research with Brandon Hall Group clearly shows that change in 2020 was pervasive, and that much of it will be lasting. But, that doesn't mean it was easy.

In fact, most organizations were not prepared for the level of change. In a study of more than 160 organizations, 75% of respondents were either “not at all” prepared for remote work or did not have a plan for remote work at this scale. And 45% realized that they would have to increase their investment in technology to handle change in the future. More than 50% of those surveyed faced challenges, ranging from training to helping employees deal with stress, managing remotely, and developing leaders.



# THE UPSIDE OF THE NEW NORMAL

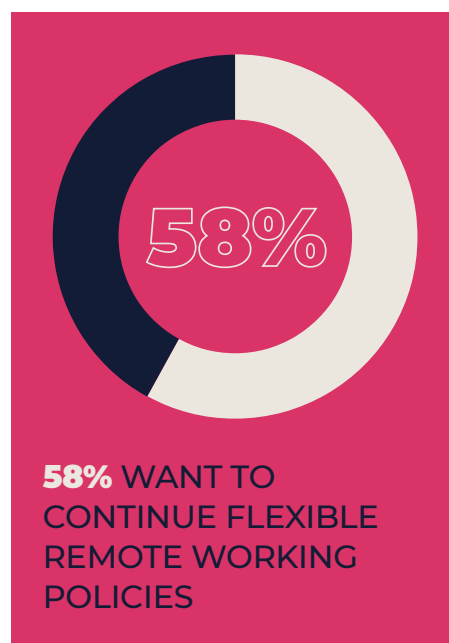
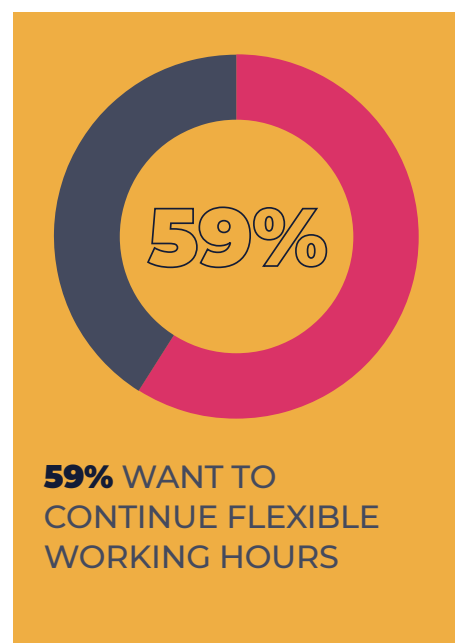
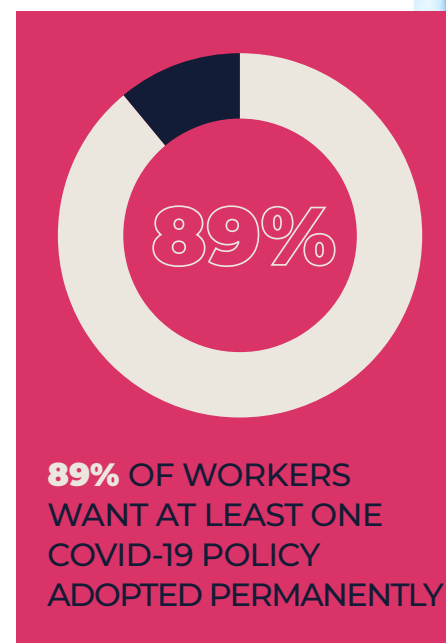
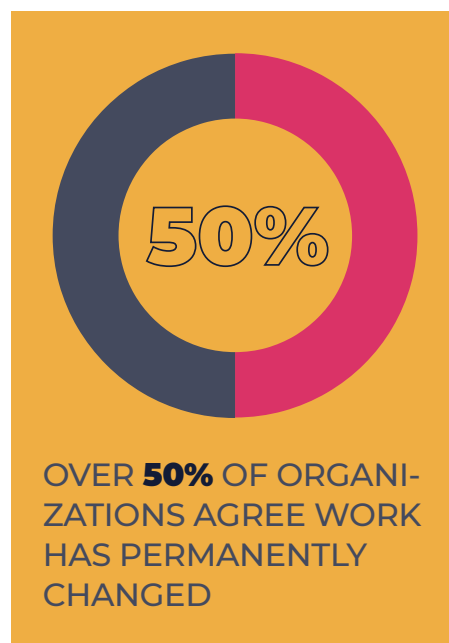
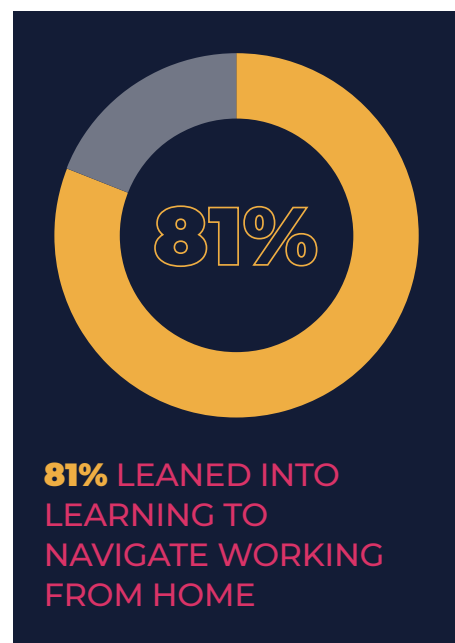
Around the world, employers and employees adjusted to lockdowns and stay-at-home orders out of concern for their families, friends, and communities. But, what may have been a struggle at first soon became an accepted way of conducting business. Many workers came to value the upside of remote work and the new normal.





## THE FUTURE WILL NEVER LOOK THE SAME

Although working remotely had its challenges, people appreciated greater flexibility. In fact, there appears to be a new social contract between organizations and individuals. Expectations are that employers will afford the workforce greater flexibility and autonomy, while concurrently investing in holistic employee experiences with opportunities for learning and growth at the center.





“Having a compelling learning experience platform is really just the start. Every organization needs to find its catalytic mix of ‘ingredients’ for employees to engage in digital learning actively.”

**CHEE KEAT KOH**  
**DIRECTOR OF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT**  
**SINGTEL**



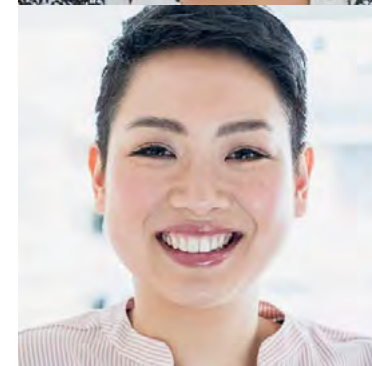
## LEARNING IS KEY TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Although it caught some companies (and nearly entire industries) off guard, 2020 sent a clear message. Digital transformation, a concept we’ve been discussing for years, isn’t a theoretical future state.

Digital transformation is here, now, whether an organization is ready or not. In some cases, the confluence of extreme circumstances of 2020 have accelerated digital transformation by years.

For many, this means new investments in technology, changes in staffing, distribution, sales, or service. For virtually all, it means a new or renewed emphasis on learning.





## AGILE IS ON THE RISE

Agile is also on the rise as a method for managing software development in the remote team environment. As organizations develop future-fit teams prepared to deal with increasingly frequent change, there's a focus on making sure agility is a priority.

**5**

OF THE TOP 15 SKILLSOFT DIGITAL BADGES ARE FOCUSED ON AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT



**6.5x**

GROWTH IN AGILE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT



**1.5x**

INCREASE SOFTWARE PROJECT LEAD TO ADVANCED SCRUM MASTER ASPIRE JOURNEY



**16.1x**

INCREASE IN COURSE COMPLETIONS ON RELEASE & SPRINT PLANNING



**14.8x**

INCREASE IN COURSE COMPLETIONS ON DEVELOPING PRODUCT AND SPRINT BACKLOGS





"A strong learning diagnostic includes mining customer data to uncover opportunities for differentiating your business."

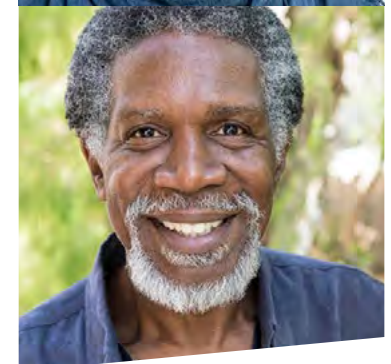
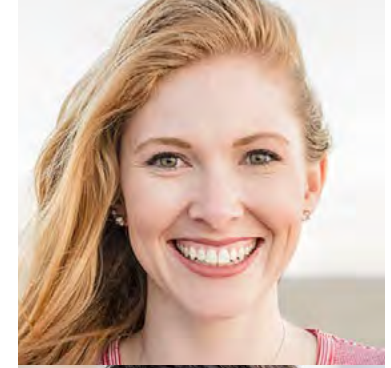
**LEISA MOATE**  
**SENIOR MANAGER**  
**LEARNING DESIGN**  
**SUPER RETAIL GROUP**

## LEARNERS NAVIGATE WITH ANALYTICS

Courses related to data analysis/structuring all seemed to rise in the 1000 percent range, suggesting that we are moving to a world that sees and values everything, especially performance, judged on the basis of quantifiable data and statistics moving forward.







## THE NEW ROLE OF THE CLO

As organizations have pivoted to meet the challenges of a disruptive year — and the opportunities of a digital future — the role of the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) is changing.

The CLO played an integral part in the near-instantaneous reskilling of the workforce in response to COVID-19. Going forward, the CLO will be well-positioned for a more strategic role driving business objectives and outcomes.

Learning is evolving:

- **From managing required training programs to igniting a culture of continual learning.**
- **From a process focus to a people focus.**
- **From net promoter scores to measured business results.**
- **From managing performance to enabling individual and organizational growth.**
- **From an adjunct of HR to a singular, strategic partner at the heart of the business.**

Today's CLO is becoming the voice of the workforce and the architect of a company culture that values, rewards, and benefits from ongoing learning and development. He or she champions the democratization of learning, making reskilling and upskilling more accessible to all. Charged with helping learners, employees, managers, and organizations reach their full potential, the CLO is redefining how to fill skills gaps, how to motivate, inspire, recognize, and reward achievement and excellence. Digital transformation has both enabled this shift and required it. The role of the Chief Learning officer has become invaluable as businesses around the world have had to adjust to unprecedented disruption in real time — and, as they prepare for whatever the future holds.





“The new diversity offerings are provocative, fresh, and spot on. They are giving our employees a place to go and engage in a topic they’re not always sure how to step into together.”

**MARIA GARRETT**  
**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF**  
**ENTERPRISE LEARNING**  
**AND LEADERSHIP**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
**NXP**



## THE UNTAPPED POWER OF INCLUSIVITY

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) was inescapably in the news in 2020 (and for good reason). But, meaningful inclusion is something that learning has always had the power to positively affect.

More and more organizations are recognizing that marginalized groups, whether that’s people of color, women in STEM, the LGBTQ+ community, or people with physical or intellectual disabilities, deserve a seat at the table — and a voice that is both heard and heeded.

But, DEI conversations are difficult. And, so is change.

Here’s the good news. Welcoming a more diverse workforce — and including them in more meaningful ways — adds valuable new perspectives to every facet of an organization. From research and development to project and people management; from sales and service to customer engagement, and more.

What many business leaders don’t realize is that DEI doesn’t just benefit the otherwise underrepresented groups. It greatly benefits the organizations that commit to it. After all, as the business world continues to expand and, through the ubiquity of digital, virtually every corporation becomes a global one, products and solutions need to address the needs of an ever-wider variety of people.

Companies are being challenged now to demonstrate a real commitment to DEI. Lip service is no longer enough. Inequities have existed far too long and C-level executives are being held accountable.

Learning is key to broadening minds, changing policies, and creating lasting change.



# LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION AT SPECIAL OLYMPICS

It's essential for organizations to continue to provide the resources and the information that will inspire teams to see the benefits of inclusion, both in terms of policy and action. The first step toward reaching true inclusion is connecting the learning mission to business outcomes. When employees feel empowered to seek information and leaders understand how to connect people to the tools they require, personal and organizational achievements go beyond ideas and become realities.

For many years, Skillsoft has worked proudly with Special Olympics to support their Leadership Academy. Deployed across 108 countries, the program provides in-person workshops and on-demand, self-directed learning to employees and volunteers with and without an intellectual disability. Learning from difference is an effective way of promoting true inclusive leadership.

Beyond this, Skillsoft has been working with Special Olympics to better understand inclusion in the workplace, and why inclusion for persons with intellectual disabilities is often overlooked in organizations around the world. We carried out a survey of over 1000 individuals from different companies, which showed that the majority of employees either don't know if their organization includes any policies or procedures centered on intellectual disability, or they don't think such programs exist. Additionally, over half of those surveyed noted that they do not discuss inclusion in casual conversation. Being afraid to discuss a topic that has been dubbed sensitive works against the concept of learning and growing. Leaders must step up to engage

**LEARN MORE ABOUT SKILLSOFT'S RESEARCH ON INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN WORKPLACE DEI**

[CLICK HERE](#)



# SECTION IV **CONCLUSION**







## LEARNING GIVES EVERY PERSON THE ABILITY TO BE AMAZING

Learning isn't just an action — it's a mindset. A personal commitment to a continuous journey of growth and self-improvement.

This is a great thing for us as learning professionals. It allows us to be part of our customers' lives for the long haul. We focus on bringing out the best in people, and we've been doing that for more than 25 years. Our mission is to help organizations use the power of learning to build a more motivated, skilled, future-fit, and resilient workforce. It was of paramount importance in 2020. And, it will continue to play a central role as companies face the future.

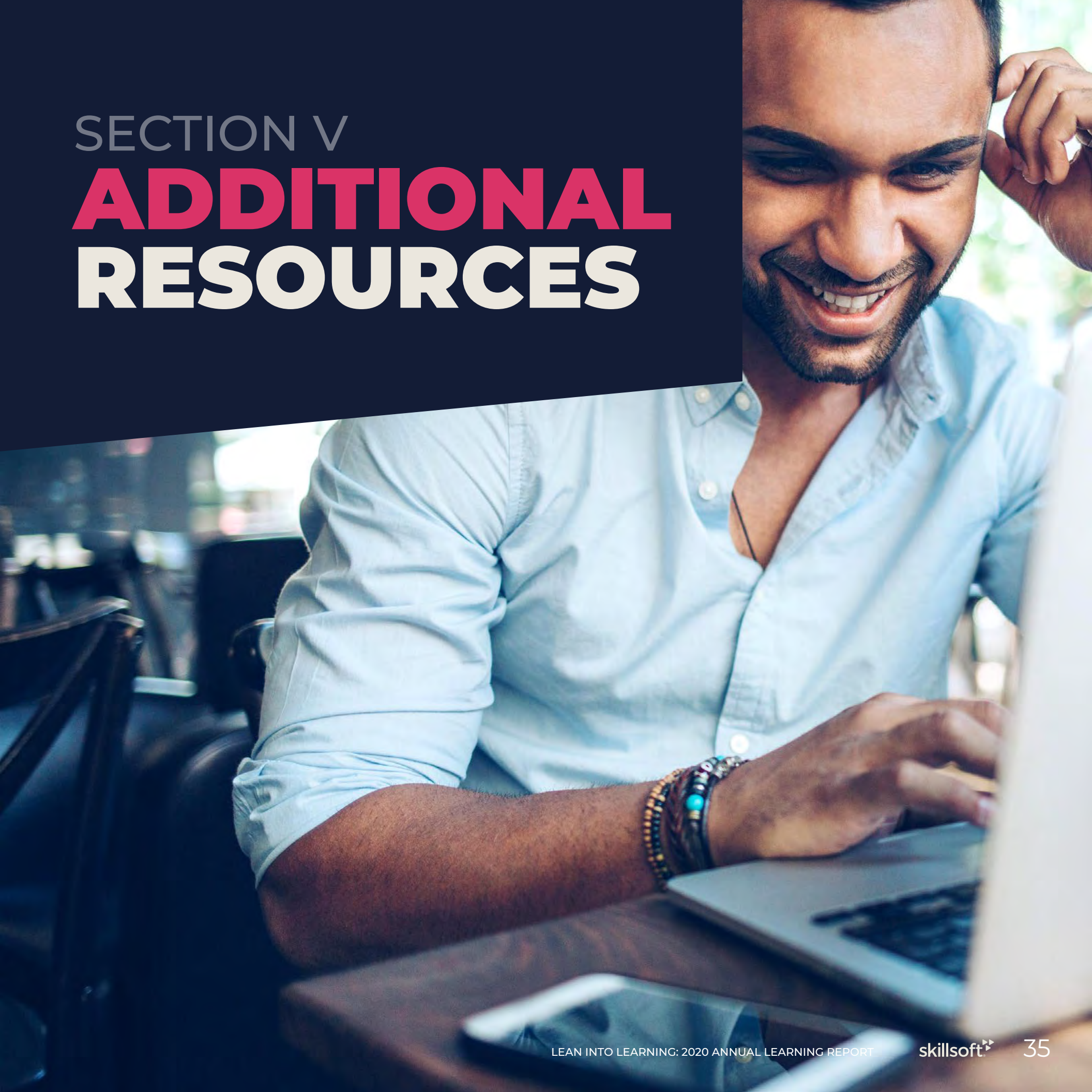
At Skillsoft, we believe every person has the potential to be amazing. We envision a world where learning is democratized, where no matter who you are or what you do, you're given the opportunity and the tools you need to fulfill your unique goals and dreams.

When that happens, workforces are engaged, active, and optimistic. Individuals can set their sights on bigger and better roles, and choose proven paths to get there. And, organizations have the skilled talent they need day-to-day, in times of unanticipated crisis, and to meet the demands of tomorrow.



SECTION V

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES





## GREATNESS, UNLEASHED

Get to know Skillsoft and how we've helped 45 million learners embrace new skills to become a future-fit, resilient workforce.

[CLICK HERE](#)



## PERCIPPIO VIDEO

Watch how Skillsoft's intelligent learning platform Percipio helps people — and organizations — adapt, evolve, grow, and thrive.

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## CASE STUDIES

Learn how organizations in every industry across the globe have made learning a powerful competitive edge.

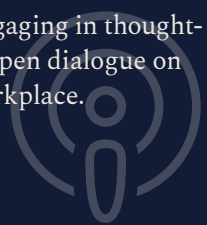
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## THE EDGE WEEKLY PODCAST

Listen to a variety of guests, engaging in thought-provoking conversations and open dialogue on learning and growth in the workplace.

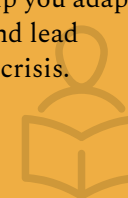
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## BUSINESS CONTINUITY LEARNING CENTER

Access resources designed to help you adapt in real time, manage remotely, and lead through times of disruption and crisis.

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## RESOURCES

Browse on-demand programs, webinars, research reports, video testimonials, ebooks, articles, and more for the latest on learning.

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## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION LEARNING CENTER

Find Leadercamps, led by DEI coaches, and a new Skillsoft 360 Report, as well as books, videos, and other tools on this timely topic.

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## SKILLSOFT BLOG

Share our team's insights on everything from the latest learning industry research and trends, to timely tips for success.

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Skillsoft delivers digital learning, training, and talent solutions to help organizations unleash their edge. Leveraging immersive, engaging content, Skillsoft enables organizations to unlock the potential in their best assets — their people — and build teams with the skills they need for success. Empowering 36 million learners and counting, Skillsoft democratizes learning through an intelligent learning experience and a customized, learner-centric approach to skills development with resources for Leadership Development, Business Skills, Technology & Development, Digital Transformation, and Compliance.

Skillsoft and SumTotal are partners to thousands of leading global organizations, including many Fortune 500 companies. The company features three award-winning systems that support learning, performance and success: Skillsoft learning content, the Percipio intelligent learning experience platform, and the SumTotal suite for Talent Development, which offers measurable impact across the entire employee lifecycle.

Learn more at [www.skillsoft.com](https://www.skillsoft.com).

**skillsoft** 


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