Leadership & Professional Development UK Survey

Hot topics and priorities for the L&D professional in 2017

Dr Ian Stewart
Head of Leadership and Organisational Performance,
Kaplan UK

INTRODUCTION

A successful approach to Leadership and Professional Development rests on:

- A unique ‘double-helix’ method to development that integrates the ‘technical’ and behavioural’ aspects of professional accomplishment
- A robust and rigorous approach to design and delivery that is experiential, emergent and reflects current best practice and research
- A faculty that enjoys unrivalled expertise in both financial education and the behavioural sciences

But there is one more, and perhaps the most important: a deep knowledge of our clients’ business and challenges that supports the commercial focus we take to create our development programmes.

The 2017 Kaplan Leadership and Professional Development UK Survey aims to share some of this with the L&D community. We hope you will find it useful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Stewart

Over the years, Ian has designed and overseen our approach to Leadership and Professional Development – an approach that embodies Kaplan’s ‘Double Helix’ of technical and behavioural development: programmes that are experiential, practical and challenging.

Before joining Kaplan, Ian spent over 20 years lecturing in leadership and related subjects at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, as well as teaching for the Open University. In addition to his role at Kaplan, he is a visiting Lecturer with CASS Business School.

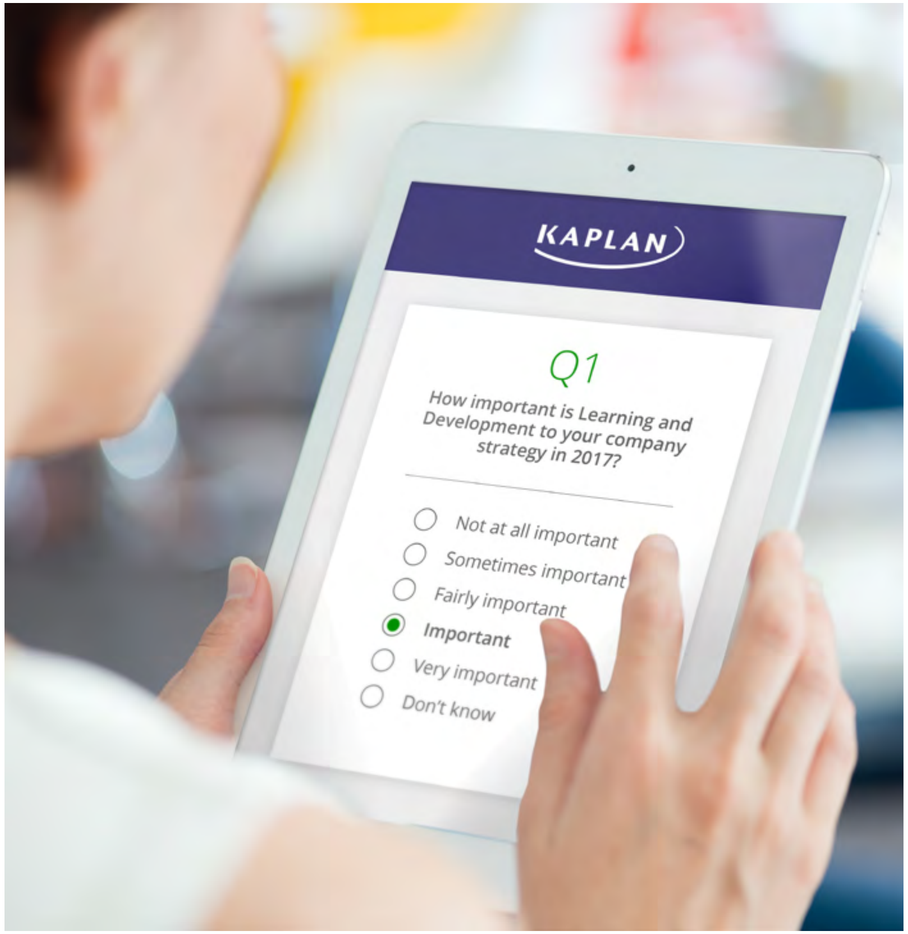
Ian has designed and delivered senior leadership and executive programmes for a range of clients, mostly, but not exclusively, from the financial services, including Legal and General, AON, Barclays, RBS, Centrica, British Sugar and the Financial Conduct Authority. He specialises in using leadership development and strategic thinking to drive organisational change and performance.

METHODOLOGY

Through October and November 2016, Kaplan surveyed over 280 UK-based Human Resources (HR) and Leadership & Professional Development (L&D) professionals to find out about the role L&D would play within their organisation in 2017.

In a context of Brexit, commercial uncertainty and globalisation of the workforce, we collected and analysed our respondents' feedback around their L&D budget, their current and future challenges and their companies' development priorities.

40% of our respondents worked in the Accountancy or Finance sectors; 7% of respondents worked in Education; 6% in I.T. and 5% in Construction. In terms of company size, 35% of our respondents were from large organisations (over 1,000 employees) 26% percent belonged to companies employing between 49 and 500 people.



KEY FINDINGS

This report analyses the results of Kaplan's 2016 UK Leadership & Professional Development survey, which aims at understanding the key challenges and priorities of anyone responsible for the development, engagement and retention of their workforce.

The four priorities of L&D professionals in 2017:

The survey highlighted four main hot topics for L&D professionals in 2017, and for each point we have provided some insight based on our experience and suggested ways of overcoming those challenges.

1. **The real value of L&D: how to measure Return On Investment (ROI) effectively**
2. **"Developing the skills of employees" and "Engaging employees" will be the two main objectives of L&D professionals**
3. **The main development areas will be Technical knowledge, Financial awareness, Performance management, Strategic thinking, Motivating and Influencing, Team work and Decision-making**
4. **Finding an L&D partner who knows their business experience and suggested ways of overcoming those challenges.**

> *"Working with KPIs, and ensuring staff motivation are my focus for 2017"*
>
> Director of Development, Education Sector

> *"My 2017 priorities? Challenging the business mind-set and demonstrating the value of L&D. Ensuring the momentum and belief of our programmes. Making sure senior leaders demonstrate consistent behaviours"*
>
> Leadership & Learning Specialist, Professional Services

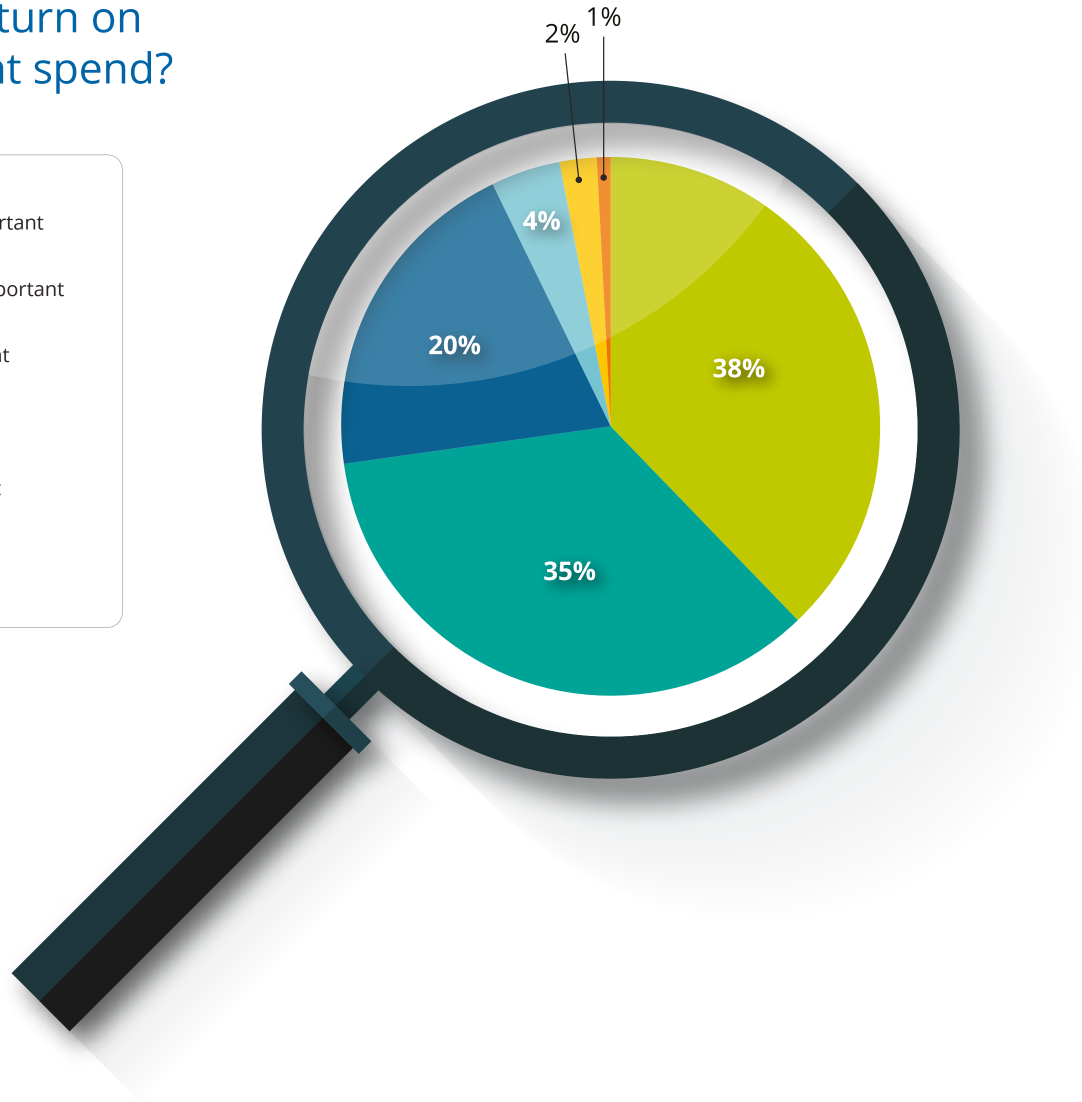
MEASURING ROI – ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

How important do you think it is to measure the return on investment from your leaderships and development spend?

It's no surprise that measuring ROI is the top issue for our colleagues in L&D. It is for training consultants and researchers too. Perhaps it's because the benefits of development may not be immediate or because individuals make use of their new skills in different ways. It could even be that the organisation itself hinders rather than helps learners apply what they learn on a programme back in the workplace.

There is also the question of what we are seeking to assess – is it the effect on the business, is it on the job performance of individuals, is it the quality of the learning intervention itself or is it the personal development of the individual?

Often, the wisest course of action is to decide which levels of effect are of most value and apply an appropriate means of assessment.



MEASURING ROI – ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Level of Assessment	Metrics	Means
Business	Business Results	Sales, Bottom Line Metrics, etc. Theory of Change, Surveys, Focus Groups, etc.
Job Performance	Behavioural Change, Increased efficiency	LM feedback, Brinkerhoff Case Study, 360s etc.
Quality of the Learning Intervention	Engagement, Challenge, Support, Facilitator Effectiveness	Formative Assessments, Quizzes, Kirkpatrick Level 1&2, etc.
Personal Development	Attitudinal and Behavioural Change; Increased Effectiveness	LM appraisals, Coaching, Promotion, Secondment, etc.

Where clients want a simple but holistic view of the ROI, we find the **Brinkerhoff case studies** to be especially useful. This method selects three or four participants and examines the impact of the development on their workplace effectiveness.

The case studies involve gathering hard business data and qualitative feedback from the key stakeholders the individual works with, and identifies those areas where the impact of the programme is being felt, but also those where it is not. This is valuable information for the sponsor – it often identifies wider organisational structures and process that are unintentionally hindering new ways of working.

We are advocates, too, of the **Theory of Change** model for planning, participation and evaluation. **Theory of Change** defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions and sets out the process of change necessary by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, i.e., its shorter-term, intermediate and longer-term outcomes.

The identified changes are mapped – as the "outcomes pathway" – showing each outcome in logical relationship to all the others, as well as chronological flow. This method provides a clear link between the strategic aims of the organisation and the role the programme of learning and development plays in achieving those aims.

ENGAGING EMPLOYEES AND DEVELOPING THEIR SKILLS: THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE L&D MANAGER

Our respondents highlighted that developing skills and engaging employees were key objectives for 2017.

What will be your main Leadership & Development objectives in 2017?

1. Developing the skills of your employees
2. Engaging employees
3. Retaining employees
4. Identifying and on-boarding talent
5. Managing performance
6. Senior team development
7. First time managers

Gallup's global survey of employee engagement reported that little over a tenth of employees were 'engaged at work'.

Worryingly, a quarter of all employees are "actively disengaged", indicating they are unhappy and unproductive at work and liable to their spread negativity around.

Providing professional development that triggers different ways of understanding the organisation, their role and their personal contribution is a powerful antidote.

But that development has to embody a commitment from the business – half day, off the shelf sessions or a series of webinars may be cheaper options in the short term, but over the longer term do they send the right message of commitment to the staff, let alone achieve meaningful improvement in their performance?

While short sessions and online learning have their place, our experience is that it is those organisations who commission and collaborate with learning partners to create developmental interventions that provide the time and space for individuals to experiment, reflect and grow, that reap the twin benefits of a more highly skilled and morel highly engaged workforce.

> *"Engaging our staff and ultimately retain them will be focus areas for me this year"*
>
> Trainer, Education Sector

HOW WILL THE L&D BUDGET BE SPENT?

As over 50% of our respondents are expecting their L&D budget to decrease or stay the same in 2017, investing in pertinent development areas remains crucial.

As a result of our survey, seven development areas have emerged as the recipients of the main L&D investment (See diagram opposite).

While these are all priorities, training budgets are, of course, finite. So how can we make the best use of a training spend? For example: How do we know how technically knowledgeable around finances are the people in the business are right now? How can we avoid teaching the 'basics' to people who already know them? How do we ensure that others who really need the basics are given them?

Kaplan's Financial Literacy Tool can help. It's an online personal assessment that uses a patented 'competence / confidence' algorithm. In simple terms, we are able to identify those respondents that are confident of their financial knowledge and are right to be confident, and respondents that are confident of their financial knowledge but are not right to be confident.

Other respondents answer correctly but lack confidence in their judgement – these respondents requires a different sort of development. They are 'hidden talent' – waiting to be unlocked. For them it is not a 'financial awareness' programmes they require, but perhaps some support and guidance around confidence or presentation. The Financial Literacy Tool allows clients to focus their investment on those who needs it and to tailor the development to their needs.

THE PERFECT L&D PARTNER SHOULD KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

When asked what the main criteria for choosing an L&D provider were, our respondents highlighted that the knowledge of their business was a decisive factor.

How important are these areas, to your company, when choosing a Leadership & Development partner in 2017?

1. **Knowledge of your business**
2. **Cost**
3. **Consultants' qualification and experience**
4. **Suppliers' reputation and track record**
5. **Innovative solutions and perspectives**
6. **Cultural fit within your business**
7. **Global capability**

A greater knowledge of a business is likely to lead to better aligned training and development. And we believe that its commercial strategy is the right starting point.

Every business talks of how within its commercial strategy that it is important that their leaders and managers make commercially astute decisions.

There is, however, a question that is rarely answered:

> How do we define what makes a decision 'commercially astute' in this organisation? Is there an object measure, or does it vary in the context of the specific challenges the business faces?

You can't prepare for every scenario, but if you have a clear, provable understanding of where risk and opportunities lie in your organisation, you can act accordingly and successfully.

At Kaplan we believe there is a new way of understanding commercial acumen in the context of a specific business, assess its current levels of understanding of what the business expects in terms of commercially savviness and create a framework to target and tailor training and development to individual needs.

Our **Commercial Acumen Diagnostic (CAD)**, an online data gathering instrument, starts with the senior team articulating the organisation's position on what it means to be commercially astute.

THE PERFECT L&D PARTNER SHOULD KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

After applying the Commercial Acumen Diagnostic tool to an organisation, we can draw up a full analysis – split into two sections: Definition and Drivers.

1 **Definition:**

It ensures there is a consistency across the top team in terms of what the business believes is good commercial practice

2 **Drivers:**

It identifies the drivers of good commercial decision making - e.g. better financial skills, strategic thinking, a better understanding of stakeholder interests, an ability to identify and leverage connections within the organisations, etc. – in this organisation

The Definition and the Drivers varies from organisation to organisation. One of our clients using the CAD is an established business; one is a small growing business – where they are in their business life cycle means that their positions around commercial behaviour are quite different. This, in turn, means that what drives the behaviours they desire and what we need to develop is different in both cases too.

CONCLUSION

We commissioned this research to help us understand our clients better. What we found has not surprised us, and the L&D priorities this survey identified for 2017 reflect the commercial challenges they face.

But perhaps the data suggests another challenge too. One closer to home: the daily challenge L&D professionals face getting their business to understand their work and the value it brings to their organisation.

As L&D professionals know only too well, the term 'development' is often used very loosely: it is usually likened to 'getting better' or the ability to apply a new piece of knowledge. And while development does entail improved skills, personal development is a more profound experience.

When an individual 'develops', they undergo significant change in how they see themselves and the business they are part of, and in the quality of their professional relations and judgements that they are able to make. It is an exhilarating and empowering experience.

Development is good for organisations and it is good for the individual too. On one hand, improved self-efficacy and the new connections people are able to make enable innovative thinking, resilience and adaptability. On the other hand, higher levels of development afford individuals a greater sense of control which, in turn, is a source of engagement and well-being.

Consider the opposite: people stuck at lower stages of development are often disengaged, do not see the bigger picture, are resistant to change and exhibit dependent behaviours.

L&D professionals know, too, how to trigger development. That it is about placing people in unfamiliar and challenging environments. It is a visceral as well as intellectual process – we need to 'feel' the challenge, as well as 'think' it.

But try telling that to a business who is locked in a traditional train and 'upskill' mindset: this is the challenge that our colleagues and clients in L&D face.

Our role as learning providers is to help our clients make the case for true development – for interventions that improve organisational performance and bring about profound and lasting professional transformation – and understanding their L&D priorities is an invaluable first step.

WHO ARE KAPLAN LEADERSHIP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Kaplan is a leading international provider of training and education services operating in more than 30 countries and working with over 2,600 corporations and businesses.

Our Leadership and Professional Development programmes develop the technical competence and the behavioural confidence of employees to help drive better decision-making at all levels within the organisation. Using a consultative and collaborative approach to designing training, we offer multi-modular programmes, business simulations, masterclasses and assessment tools that deliver challenging and practically relevant professional learning experiences.

Kaplan also provide professional accountancy and financial training, vocational qualifications and apprenticeships, financial markets, postgraduate and undergraduate degrees.

If you'd like to learn more about our Leadership & Professional Development Programmes, speak to one of our L&D experts:

020 3122 0100

businesstraining@kaplan.co.uk

www.kaplanleadership.com

You can also access our latest L&D Insights on:
www.kaplan.co.uk/insights