# AI reshapes learning and development as leaders balance disruption and opportunity



Artificial intelligence is transforming the learning and development (L&D) sector, with industry leaders anticipating both disruption and new opportunities. A LearnUpon survey of 600 L&D leaders across the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand found that 43 per cent believe their roles could be replaced by AI, while 40 per cent expect partial disruption. Only three per cent see no impact at all, highlighting a profession at a critical turning point.

Despite this anxiety, wellbeing remains a top priority. Forty-four per cent of respondents ranked mental health as their leading focus in 2024, ahead of AI-driven learning and microlearning at 42 per cent. This reflects an understanding that while technology is reshaping delivery, human-centred support remains essential.

Budgets are also holding up strongly. Seventy per cent of UK leaders, 66 per cent in the US, and 84 per cent in Australia and New Zealand expect budget increases in 2025. At the same time, 91 per cent say they can now track the impact of their programmes effectively, shifting measurement from course completions to deeper indicators such as skills development and business performance. “L&D leaders are being tasked with reshaping employee experiences and fostering business stability—goals that demand strategic technology adoption and precise measurement,” said Brendan Noud, CEO of LearnUpon.

AI is already augmenting L&D functions. Automation supports content creation, personalised learning and real-time chatbot mentoring, while AI-driven analytics identify skills gaps and optimise pathways. Surveys suggest most leaders expect AI to enhance creativity and strategy rather than simply eliminate jobs.

The rise of AI is also reshaping workforce priorities more broadly. Research by the AI Workforce Consortium shows that 78 per cent of IT jobs now require AI skills, though shortages persist in areas such as ethics and security. Academic analysis suggests demand is growing for complementary skills like teamwork and resilience, while routine tasks lose value.

Reports indicate that AI disruption is more likely to reduce outsourced or offshore roles than core in-house positions, with companies using AI to boost productivity in areas such as sales and marketing. For freelancers, AI is creating higher-earning opportunities for those who can leverage new tools effectively.

Challenges remain, including attracting talent, aligning L&D with wider business strategies and keeping pace with rapid technological change. Yet the sector is adapting by prioritising data analytics, AI fluency and leadership development as essential skills for the future.

The evidence points to a selective but powerful transformation. While AI will reshape L&D, leaders who balance technological adoption with investment in human-centred skills and wellbeing are positioned to elevate their role from support function to strategic driver of business performance.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/nearly-half-of-ld-leaders-expect-ai-to-replace-their-roles/383904> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itpro.com/business/careers-and-training/enterprises-are-concerned-about-critical-shortages-of-staff-with-ai-ethics-and-security-expertise> - A report by the AI Workforce Consortium, led by Cisco and including companies like Google, Microsoft, and SAP, reveals that 78% of IT job roles now demand AI skills, with AI-related positions growing rapidly. However, enterprises face significant shortages in specialized areas such as large language models, prompt engineering, generative AI, AI ethics, and AI security, threatening the responsible and secure scaling of AI technologies. The report emphasizes the rising importance of 'human skills' — including communication, problem-solving, and leadership — in conjunction with technical expertise. Workforce upskilling is a key focus, with consortium members committing to reskill 95 million people globally over the next decade. They are providing resources like a responsible AI guide, over 200 curated AI and technical courses, and a standardized AI skills glossary. The fastest-growing AI job markets include Silicon Valley, London, Toronto, and emerging hubs like Manchester, Lyon, and Vancouver. Experts stress the need for continuous skills development to keep pace with AI's transformation of the labor market and organizational structures.
3. <https://learnexus.com/blog/survey-report-impact-of-ai-on-roles/> - A survey by Learnexus indicates that 75% of Learning & Development (L&D) professionals believe AI will significantly impact their job roles in the next 3-5 years. Only a small fraction believe that AI will create more jobs (5%) or have no significant impact (2%), while 16% feel it could make some roles redundant. Over half of the professionals in the field (52%) anticipate that AI will primarily serve to enhance creativity and strategic thinking in their roles. This suggests that the majority of professionals in this field anticipate significant changes to the nature of their work due to AI integration. The data indicates that while there may be some job displacement, the prevailing expectation is that AI will not so much eliminate positions as it will evolve them, requiring current professionals to adapt to new ways of working alongside AI technologies.
4. <https://www.axios.com/2025/08/18/ai-jobs-layoffs> - The MIT State of AI in Business 2025 report reveals that artificial intelligence is predominantly displacing outsourced and offshore jobs rather than directly leading to layoffs among U.S. workers. Though AI currently affects only about 3% of jobs, it could impact up to 27% in the long term. The disruption is being felt more remotely, particularly in positions already considered low priority or contracted out. As companies shift focus, they're choosing not to renew outsourcing contracts rather than terminating in-house staff. This approach is yielding financial benefits. Notably, around 50% of corporate AI budgets are directed toward sales and marketing initiatives. The report offers both optimism and caution for investors, suggesting that AI could improve productivity and profits without triggering mass layoffs—an ideal scenario for economic stability and growth.
5. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2412.19754> - This paper examines the impact of AI on skill demand and compensation in the U.S. economy, analysing 12 million online job vacancies from 2018 to 2023. It investigates internal effects (within-job substitution and complementation) and external effects (across occupations, industries, and regions). The findings reveal a significant increase in demand for AI-complementary skills, such as digital literacy, teamwork, and resilience, alongside rising wage premiums for these skills in AI roles like Data Scientist. Conversely, substitute skills, including customer service and text review, have declined in both demand and value within AI-related positions. Examining external effects, the study finds a notable rise in demand for complementary skills in non-AI roles linked to the growth of AI-related jobs in specific industries or regions. Overall, AI's complementary effect is up to 50% larger than its substitution effect, resulting in net positive demand for skills. These results, replicated for the UK and Australia, highlight AI's transformative impact on workforce skill requirements. They suggest reskilling efforts should prioritise not only technical AI skills but also complementary skills like ethics and digital literacy.
6. <https://blog.trainingpros.com/how-learning-and-development-departments-are-using-ai-to-transform-training/> - AI is transforming Learning and Development (L&D) departments by automating content creation, personalising learning experiences, and providing real-time support. AI-powered chatbots serve as digital mentors, offering instant access to information and microlearning content, thereby reducing training gaps and enhancing employee confidence. Additionally, AI assists in intelligent knowledge management by automatically categorising and indexing learning resources, streamlining knowledge-sharing across organisations. Furthermore, AI-driven assessments analyse performance, identify skill gaps, and provide targeted training recommendations, enabling L&D leaders to make data-driven decisions for enhancing training programmes.
7. <https://www.axios.com/2025/06/30/ai-job-vibe-coding-upwork> - A study by Upwork highlights that while AI is indeed replacing some jobs, particularly low-complexity and repetitive tasks, the scope of this substitution is narrow. The report finds that generative AI is not broadly eliminating employment but is instead enhancing job opportunities, especially for experienced freelancers who can proficiently integrate AI into their work. Freelance earnings from AI-related jobs have increased by 25% year over year, with business leaders favouring skilled workers who leverage AI to augment, not replace, tasks. Despite a decline in demand for basic coding work, there remains steady demand for complex development tasks, pointing to a nuanced shift in job roles.