POST TRAINING ACTIVITIES

A Research Report
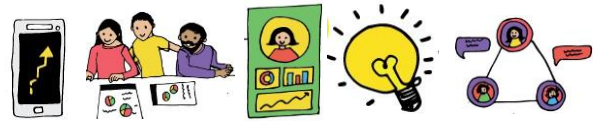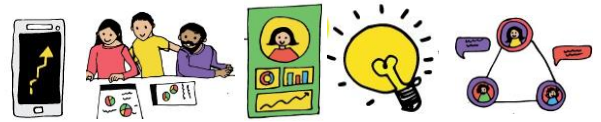
TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY

Learning & Development professionals are constantly on the lookout for how to design learning that is more impactful, sticky, relevant and contextual. In this context, one aspect is crystal clear – a one-time training intervention has minimum impact.

Development is a long – term process, requiring spaced exposure, practice and application. A blended methodology is a good way to design a continuous learning journey. It should incorporate various types of learning interventions to enhance retention and enable learners to apply the learning at work.

In this research piece, we have tried to understand the various post training interventions that learning & development professionals and HR professionals leverage to strengthen the learning design for their cohorts.
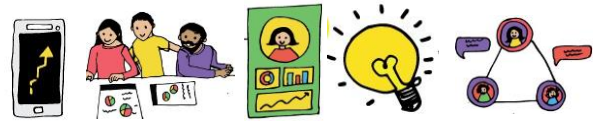
We define post training interventions as any learning activity which complements the primary classroom/physical workshop intervention. These could include any or more of the following:

- Email communications with the training content/deck/pdfs
- Videos related to the content of the training
- Live projects which enable learners to apply the concepts to specific work areas
- Application exercises which can include case-lets or scenarios wherein learners can apply their learning
- Webinars with experts in the subject
- Use of WhatsApp/social platforms for interactions
- Game based content
- Case Studies etc.

In this research, we have tried to understand the following points amongst other aspects:

- Which kind of post training activities are being currently leveraged? And which are the preferred activities?

- What are the difficulties that professionals face while designing post training activities?

- What is the likelihood of their using mobile based microlearning in the near future?

Summarized from the responses of 30 learning & development and HR professionals, this research covers a wide range of industries. In the next page, we have highlighted the key insights that emerged from the research.

KEY INSIGHTS

1 Post training interventions are currently still underutilized despite its usefulness in driving training effectiveness.

2 Currently, the top 3 types of post training activities being used are email communications, videos and live projects. The most preferred post training activities are live projects, application exercises and videos. Social learning is yet to gain popularity as a post training tool.

3 Behavioural and leadership programs are the top contenders for including post training activities. However, there is a strong case for incorporating post training activities in onboarding programs, sales trainings, customer care trainings and compliance trainings

4 Post training activities should ideally extend to 60 to 90 days for maximum impact

5 Approximately 76% of the respondents are likely or very likely to use mobile based microlearning in their annual learning and development plans.

6 The best way to encourage learners to engage with post training activities is to make it as relevant for them as possible in their jobs.

7 The top barriers faced by respondents in designing and delivering post training interventions include: lack of time to continuously deliver the interventions and lack of prioritization for post training activities

Let's take a deep dive into each of the sections for more information.

METHODOLOGY

FocusU Engage solicited responses from HR Business Partners and Learning and Development professionals through an online survey from 1st September 2019 to 29th October 2019. The survey questionnaire was sent out to the email list of FocusU Engage customers and also posted on LinkedIn.

SURVEY RESULTS

Each of the following sections show the results of each question in the survey.

Organization Business

Which of the following best describes the business of your organization?

We wanted to understand the industries that the respondents came from to ensure comprehensive coverage. Below is the snapshot of the same:
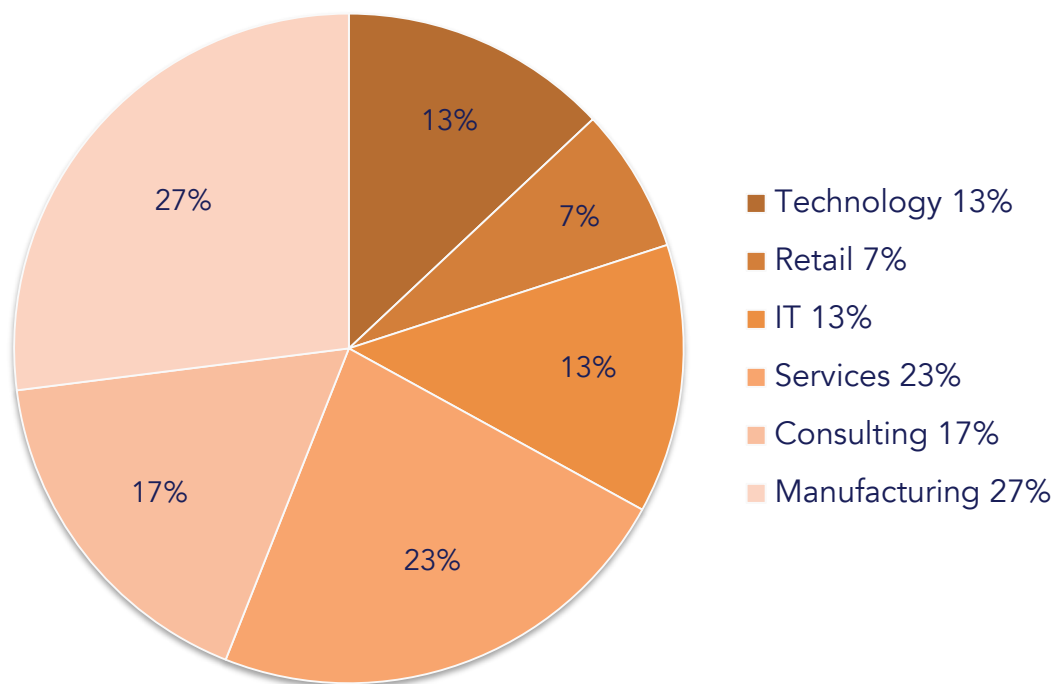
A few respondents belonged to other industries such as semiconductor R&D, media, e – commerce, pharmaceuticals & logistics. The graph establishes the breadth of the industries that we have been able to cover through our research.
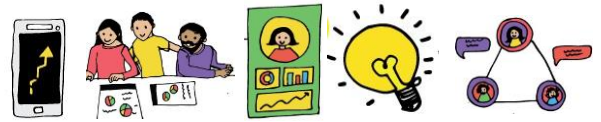
Respondents' Role

Which of the following statements best describes your current role?

We wanted to ensure that we received valid responses for our research. Respondents are directly or indirectly involved in the design and delivery 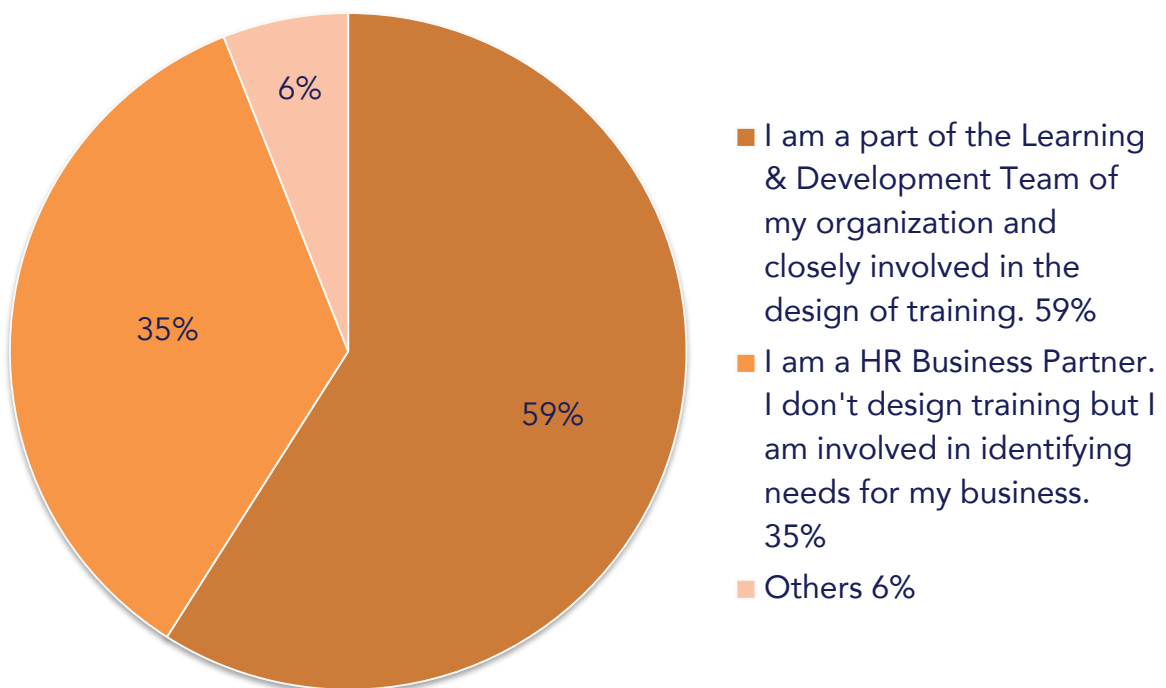of Learning and Development interventions – either in their organizations, teams or for customers. Below is a snapshot of the profile of respondents for our survey:

- I am a part of the Learning & Development Team of my organization and closely involved in the design of training. 59%
- I am a HR Business Partner. I don't design training but I am involved in identifying needs for my business. 35%
- Others 6%

Approximately **60%** of the respondents are closely involved in the design of training in their organization.

Other respondents included an independent L&D Consultant and a Business Unit Head. We have considered their responses as valid as both have an impact on how learning interventions are delivered.

Defining Post Training Activities

How would you define post training activities?

Through this question, we wanted to understand how our respondents define and perceive post training activities. Though we didn't get a very clear word cloud, we received multiple perspectives. Some of these are shared below:

"Supporting learning transfer and applicability after a critical learning experience or event"

"Projects, assignments and on the job activities to ensure on the job training transfer."

"Post training activities are what create transfer of learning to workplace. They drive application and thus results. Outcomes of a program get realized not through the content covered, but thru how well the post training activities drive transfer of the content at workplace"

"Training needs to be coupled with a mandatory on the job project. Activities like quick learning bites, group coaching, peer connect could be a few great options."
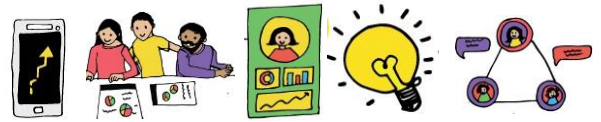
"Ready reckoner, follow up sessions, defined action plan and opportunities to practice is what I define as post training activities"

"70 and 20 percent of the 70/20/10 model"

"Should lead to change in behaviour which should be measurable"

A few insights that emerged from the definitions are as follows:

- Post training activities could include multiple elements such as follow up sessions, reminders, handbooks/ready reckoners, defined action plans, projects, case studies or even learning clubs and shadowing. This clearly indicates that learning professionals are clearly experimenting with different types of post – training activities.
- One of the clear objectives of post training activities is to enable transfer of learning. Sometimes, post training activities are conducted with a focus on assessment and feedback.

Current Programs including Post Training Activities

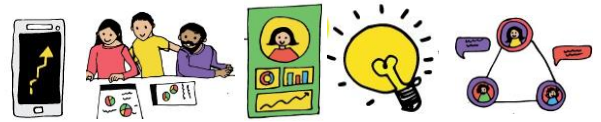*Consider the behavioral training programs managed/developed by you in the last 12 months. What percentage of those programs included post training activities?*

We wanted to understand how frequently are professionals leveraging post – training activities in their current bouquet of offerings. Here's a snapshot of the responses:

Range	Percentage
0-20	36.67%
21-40	20.00%
41-60	13.33%
61-80	20.00%
81-100	10.00%
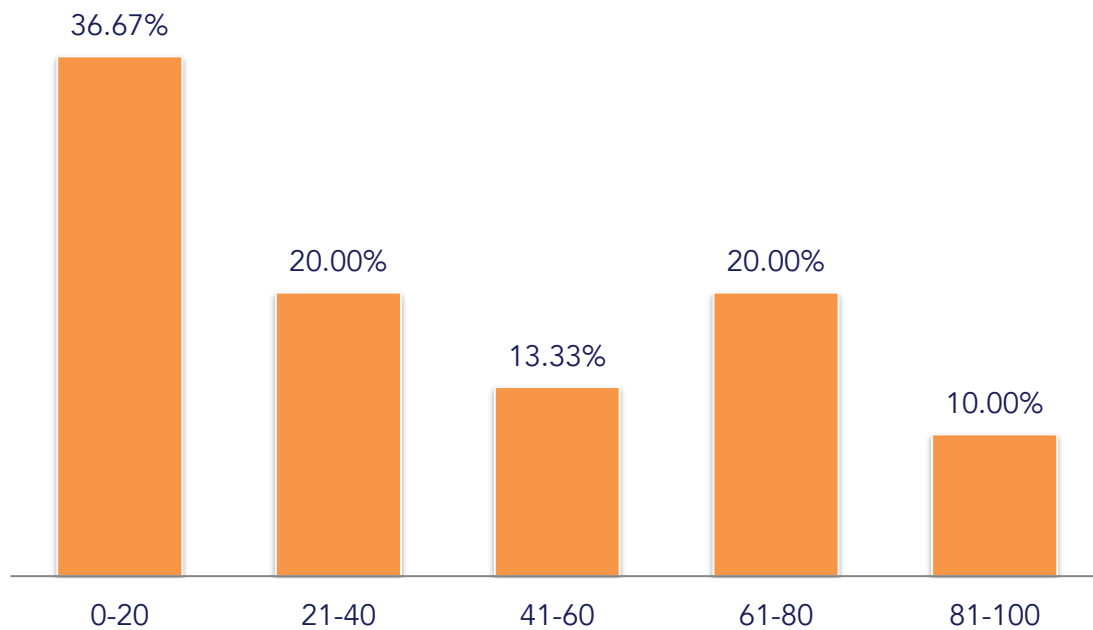
The data clearly indicates that post training activities are still quite under-utilized despite the perceived usefulness. Approximately **a third** of the respondents have used post training activities for up to **20%** of their trainings.

We studied this data to understand if the frequency differs across industries or the respondents' roles and we found no significant differences.

Types of Post Training Activities

Which of the following have you used for post training activities? Select all that apply.

Through this question, we wanted to dive a little deeper into the types of activities our respondents are leveraging and identify the most prevalent ones. Below is the snapshot of the data that we received:

This graph gives us the following insights:

- The top 3 types of post training activities include :
  - ➤ Email Communications which include reading/slide decks/PDFs.
  - ➤ Videos
  - ➤ Live projects

- While email communications are easier to manage, it's interesting to observe that many respondents are leveraging live projects, despite the difficulty and persistence involved in managing the same.

- On digging deeper into the data, we found that L&D professionals are much more likely to use live projects, quizzes and social learning platforms as post training activities as compared to HR Business Partners.

- Tools like case studies and application exercise are still underutilized. They are not only effort – intensive but also require deeper diagnosis and SME insights in most cases.

- Social learning activities are slowly catching up and are still underutilized. Expert webinars and platforms which encourage interaction among participants could be powerful learning platforms.
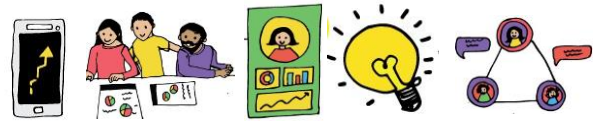
Preference for Post Training Activities

Which of the following would you prefer to use more often as post training activities? Select all that apply.

Through this question, we wanted to dive a little deeper into the types of post training activities that our respondents would prefer to use more often. Below is the snapshot of the data that we received:
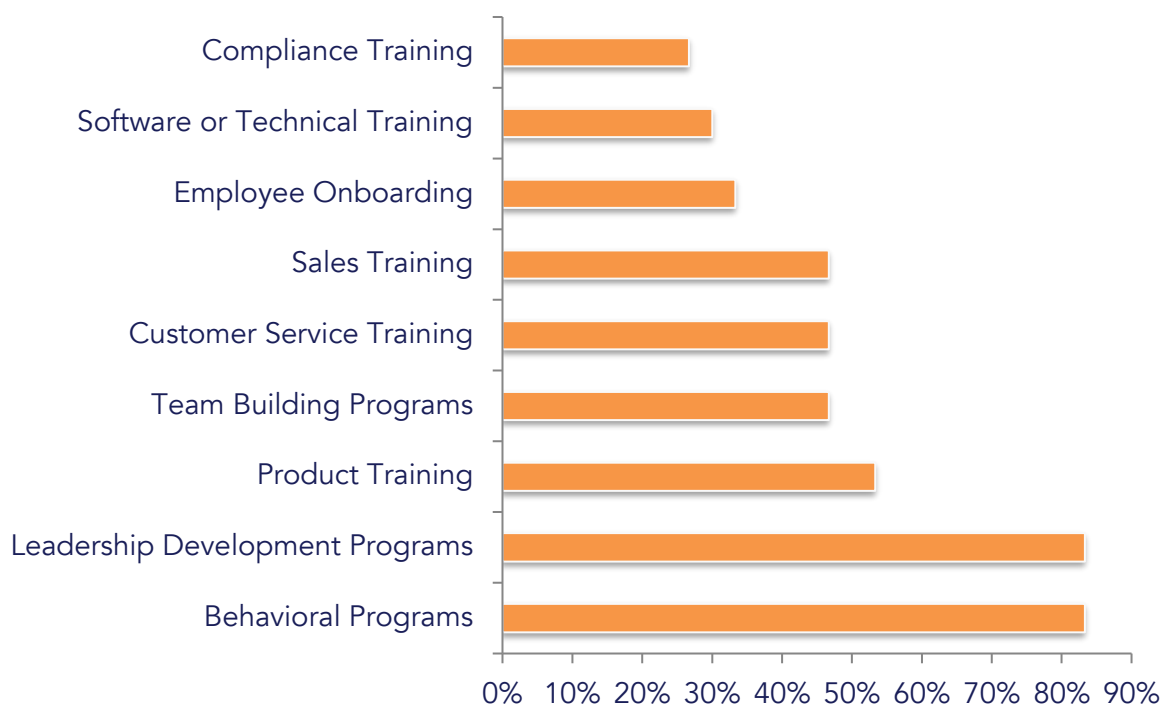
Below are some of the key insights that emerge from the above graph:

- **Live project** is clearly a winner when it comes to the preferred post learning activity. Live projects not only help in applying concepts, it also delivers a clear ROI for the training. Also, often live projects are chosen by the employees from their area of work or expertise and there is a high motivation to engage with them.

- **Videos** are again highly preferred and utilized. With the ease of use of mobile phones to record videos, this could be an easy and effective way for learning and development professionals to deliver post program modules. However, videos need to be complemented with reflection exercises to make them effective.

- **Application Exercises** another candidate for post training activities which is preferred, yet not utilized fully currently. Designing application exercises is an effort intensive exercise, requiring detailed conversations ongoing partnership with SMEs.

- **Game based content** is again an activity which is preferred yet not used frequently because of the difficulty in development. It is important to note that game-based content without proper application orientation may engage learners but not ensure transfer of learning.

- **Case Studies** feature at the bottom of the list and this is quite interesting. Though case studies and discussions could be powerful tools, HR BPs and learning & development professionals may be preferring application exercises as it is easier for participants to consume in shorter durations and may in fact be more relevant to the learner's role.

- Amongst the respondents who chose 'Others', we received the following inputs:

  - ➤ The choice of the post program activities will often depend on the topic, length of the program and program objectives.
  - ➤ Coaching and mentoring can also form part of post training activities.

? Types of trainings suitable for Post Training Activities

For which of the following, would you be more likely to consider post training activities for? Select all that apply.

Compliance Training
Software or Technical Training
Employee Onboarding
Sales Training
Customer Service Training
Team Building Programs
Product Training
Leadership Development Programs
Behavioral Programs

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%

Clearly, **Behavioral and Leadership Development programs** are the priority when it comes to designing post training activities for. On digging deeper, we found that L&D professionals are much more likely to recommend post training activities for **customer service trainings** as compared to HR Business partners.

It is important to note that post training activities could be beneficial for trainings beyond leadership and behavioral programs. For example:

- **Employee Onboarding:** After the initial onboarding, post training activities could further strengthen the new employee's understanding of the organization's values and role competencies. Application exercises can actually help learners put the values and competencies in practice.

- **Customer Service Training & Sales Training**: These can also benefit highly from post training activities. Through the use of application exercises, participants can learn to apply concepts, make decisions and even see the impact of those decisions.

- **Compliance Training:** Often compliance training, seen as a tick mark activity, can benefit loads from suitable post training activities. Imagine the code of conduct being delivered through a series of application exercises which help the

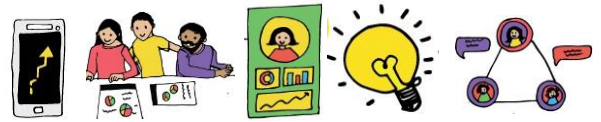participants to make decisions. These application exercises could by itself be run as a training intervention.

Duration of Post Training Activities

Consider a 2 – day behavioral training. How long should the post program engagement ideally be?

Duration for the post training activities is an important design consideration. Spaced activities are very effective in ensuring long term retention and application. However, too lengthy a duration may not be suitable for sustaining the engagement of the participants.

Respondents clearly feel that the post training activities should extend for at least **60 to 90 days** post the primary intervention. There is an increasing maturity in the way organizations are viewing their training programs. From earlier being viewed as one-off interventions, organizations are now seeking a longer-term view that delivers ROI for the money spent on development interventions.

- >90 days 13%
- 2 weeks 10%
- 30 days 13%
- 60 days 30%
- 90 days 34%
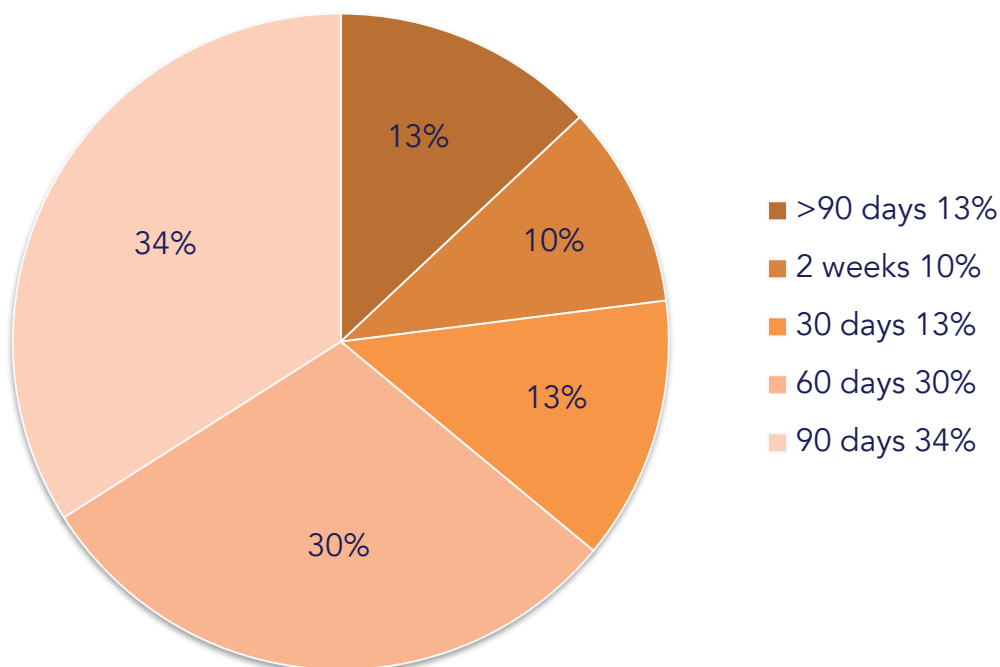
Likelihood of using mobile based microlearning for Post Training Activities

Consider your learning and development plan for the next 1 year. How likely are you to use mobile based microlearning for post program activities? (Microlearning is the use of shorts bursts of learning spread across a variety of formats)

The modern learner experiences a very unique environment, fraught with stimuli. Additionally, the modern learner is exposed to a wide variety of rich media and access to a wide variety of devices. However, what hasn't changed is the way we learn: through experiences, reflection, contextualization and practice.

Mobile based microlearning is very well placed to enable learners learn in the best way in the current environment. Delivered through short bursts, microlearning is being widely used by several industries. To read more about it, you can click here: https://focusu.com/microlearning-solutions/

Approximately **76%** of respondents are either likely or very likely to consider mobile based microlearning in designing their learning and development plans for the next 1 year. There is a consensus for the fact that learning needs to be an ongoing journey. Respondents' preference for microlearning is an indication of their pragmatic appreciation of the fact that learning needs to be where the learner is and not the other way around.

Another interesting perspective to note is that, emails, group learning, quizzes and live projects, all of which are being used currently by L&D professionals to deliver post training activities, can be delivered through a single microlearning platform.

- Very Unlikely 7%
- Unlikely 7%
- Neutral 7%
- Likely 30%
- Very Likely 46%
- Not very sure of microlearning
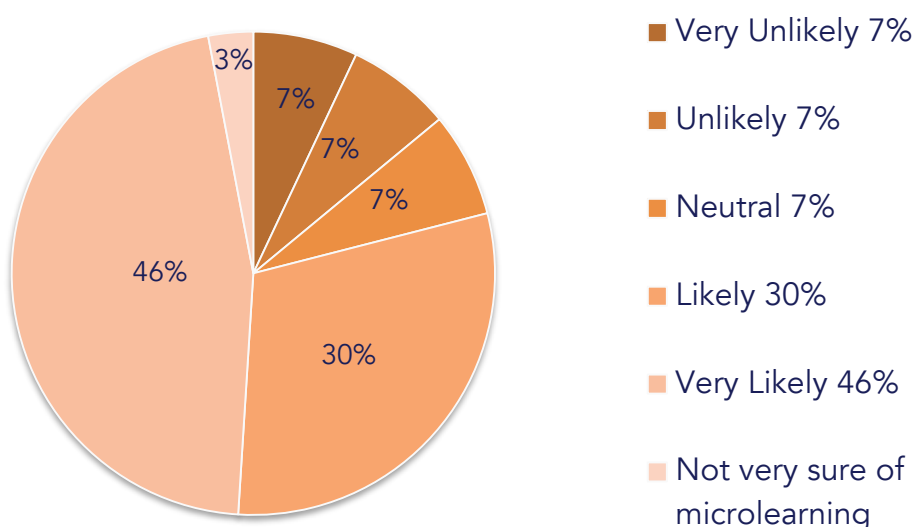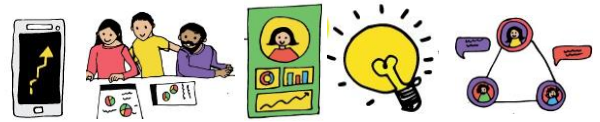
## Encouraging Participants to engage in Post Training Activities

From the list below, select the top three ways that participants can be encouraged to complete the post program activities.

Participants often think of training and development as a one-time intervention delivered in a classroom setting. Hence learning and development professionals deploy a variety of techniques to engage learners in post training activities to ensure transfer of learning.

This graph throws up some interesting insights:

- **Relevance of learning activities to the role** tops this list. This also explains why respondents chose live projects and application exercises as their most preferred choice of post training activities. **Opportunity to network and learn from peers** is second on this list. However, social learning activities are yet to catch up and this space requires further exploration.

- On digging deeper into the data, we found that L&D professionals are much more likely to use **dashboards** to encourage learner engagement as compared to HR Business partners.

- One would expect that encouraging communication from the leader would be an effective tool. However, it still acts as an extrinsic motivator and is not effective in the long run. The same holds true for a reward promised at the end of the journey.
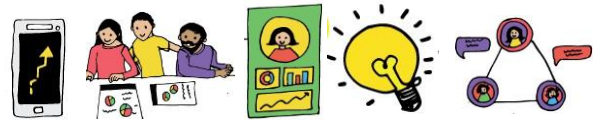
Barriers to delivering Post Training Activities

Which of the following barriers do you face while designing and delivering post program activities? Select all that apply.

Through this question, we wanted to identify the key barriers that our respondents are facing while designing and delivering post training activities, despite the importance it holds in the learning landscape.
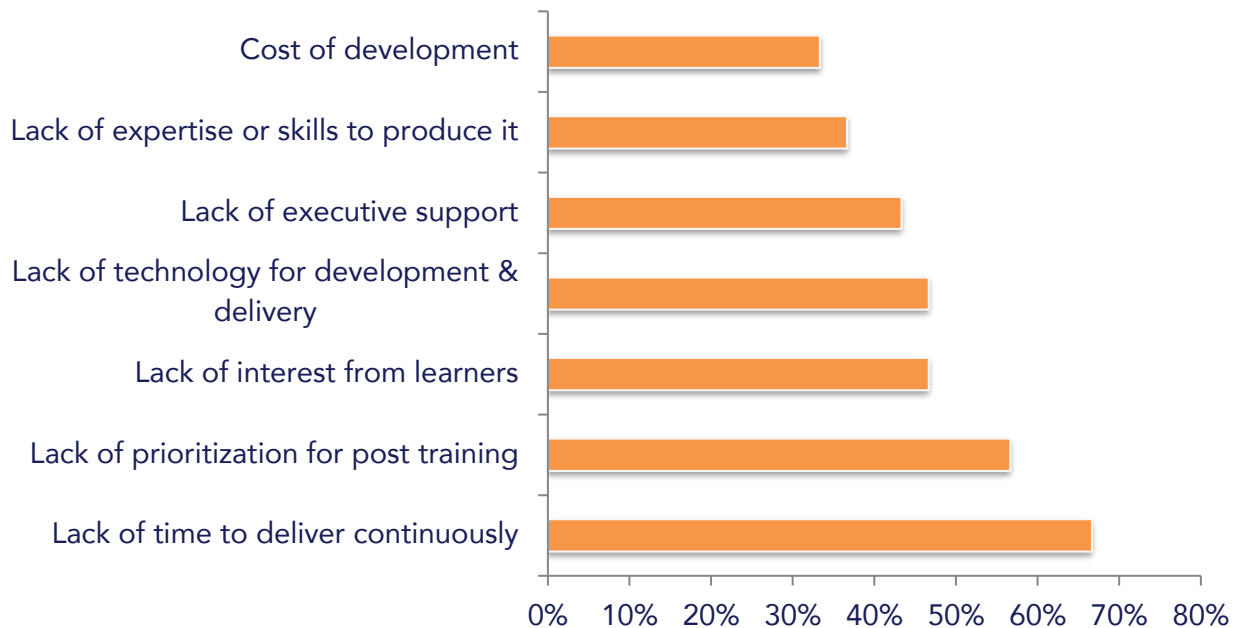
Interestingly, the top 2 barriers are very closely related. Delivering post training activities is a time-consuming job, requiring a cycle of design and adaptations, follow up and communications. Often the outcomes may not be very clearly visible or communicated. This is where, it loses priority. Rolling out of new training interventions targeted at new groups gain priority.

Microlearning can be one of the solutions to this barrier. Microlearning modules typically have a wide variety of learning activities, ranging from short reads, videos, explainers, emails, reflection activities, short assessments and application activities. Most microlearning platforms also allow for capturing feedback and manage a dashboard which makes life easier. Unlike the traditional scorm based e-content, microlearning modules are easy to curate and deliver and could help overcome this barrier.

Interestingly, traditional barriers such as lack of executive support, availability of technology, skills or cost continue to play a role. As a learning & development organization, one of the key areas that we hear from client L&D professionals is that leaders do not buy in because they are not able to see ROI.

Additional Comments

Any other comment that you would like to add which captures your views about Post Training activities?

In this open – ended question, we wanted to capture any other thoughts that the respondents might have with respect to post training activities. Below is a snapshot of the key responses:

"Post training is an important element. The appreciation for it is there. What will make this easier is if it can be readily available and blended into existing programs."

"This is the crux of a Learning intervention, and this is where most of the learning interventions fail"

"Leaders should be fully aligned on post training activities prior to nominating their team members for the program. The success of the post training activities is heavily dependent on how the same is communicated, agreed and aligned between the learner and the manager. What I also feel is that the post training activities must articulate the value " what's in it for me" for the learner or it fails!"

"Need help from mobile app for "on the go" access"

"Difficult to maintain the group enthusiasm"

"A lot depends on how managers and business leaders position the post training activities. Participants don't see much value in the program and complete post training projects half - heartedly. Getting buy in from senior managers and business leaders early on (before the training) helps participants take post training activities seriously."

"Need to identify triggers and barriers to behaviour change"

While the importance of post training activities is being acknowledged and its need is keenly perceived by learning professionals, there is a clear sense that more needs to be done on this front for the investment in learning to actually bear fruit. So far, learning professionals have been struggling to find tools to achieve this. However, microlearning could be the light at the end of the tunnel for many. How this plays out, is something all of us will be keenly watching in the days to come.
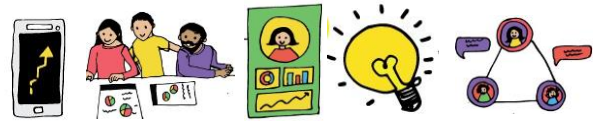
REFERENCES

Shank, P. (2019). Blended Learning in today's workplace: Uses and Results.

Sood, I. (2018). Microlearning Research: What, How, When.

Peter C. Brown, Henry L. Roediger III, Mark A. McDaniel. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA (2014). Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning

About FocusU Engage India

Founded in 2010, FocusU is amongst the most respected names in the blended learning space in India today. Head quartered in Gurugram, the company has its footprints in Bangalore, Mumbai and Mauritius too. Around 30000 participants a year are touched by FocusU programs every year. To know more,
visit: www.focusu.com