

The logo consists of the letters 'QA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The 'Q' is slightly larger than the 'A'. The background is a teal color with a pattern of white and light teal circles of varying sizes, some overlapping.

**2022**

**Learning**

**TRENDS REPORT**

**Insights, outcomes and trends from the  
QA Autumn Customer Survey**

A decorative pattern of teal circles of various sizes, scattered across the bottom half of the page. The circles are semi-transparent and overlap, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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# Why we created the report

**Our observations on how the learning landscape has evolved and what this means for your organisation's success**



# Why we created this report

## “The world has changed”.

It’s a saying I’ve heard many times in the past 2 years. It has a sense of finality, as if we’ve reached our destination, with the rules for post-pandemic life clearly set and understood.

Digital Transformation, hybrid-working and cloud are just 3 of the concepts that have become part of the daily vocabulary in many organisations.

At QA, we hear every day from learners and organisations alike that for them, the world has not changed: it is still changing. And that’s why we created this report. We ran a survey which asked our customers to share their views on training and plans for the next year, ranging from which topic areas were most important to them, to questions about favoured modalities and training spend.

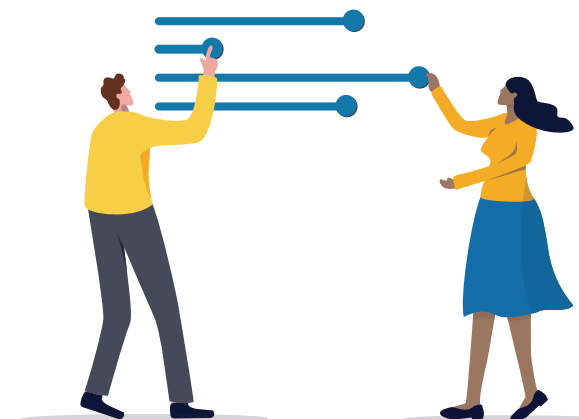
By combining the rich insights we received from our customers with our historical data,

we created the 2022 Learning Trends Report – the first of many reports which will both reflect on how training has evolved in the past few years, and make recommendations to enable you to stay ahead of the competition.

I’d like to thank all of those who took part in our survey, and would invite you to get in touch with me via the email or LinkedIn buttons below if you’d like to discuss your organisation’s needs in more detail.



**Adam Jones**  
Managing Director of Learning Sales [✉](#) [in](#)



**Change is the only constant in life.**

HERACLITUS,  
GREEK PHILOSOPHER

**See next page for a summary of recommendations**

# Our recommendations

By comparing our survey with our historical trends, we'll tell you **which areas of training you should focus on** and **make recommendations in 3 areas** that we believe organisations should prioritise in order to make their training as effective as possible:

## 1) Learning culture



Time-boxed training is only the beginning: organisations need to establish a culture of continual learning and improvement in the workplace. We'll discuss the business advantages of establishing a learning culture and how you can support learners in "keeping up the momentum" long after completion of a training course.

## 2) Training for the unknown



You may have heard of the VUCA acronym. It stands for "volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous", and it describes the business environment we are in. We'll detail how "training for the unknown" enables organisations to spring into action to meet a new challenge, rather than chasing behind it.



## 3) Empowering the learner

Making sure learners have a stake in their own success is how you incentivise and encourage them to put their all into learning. How do you best empower a learner to own their development? We will cover how expertise in learning ensures learners engage including the modalities, learning theories and enablers that support this.



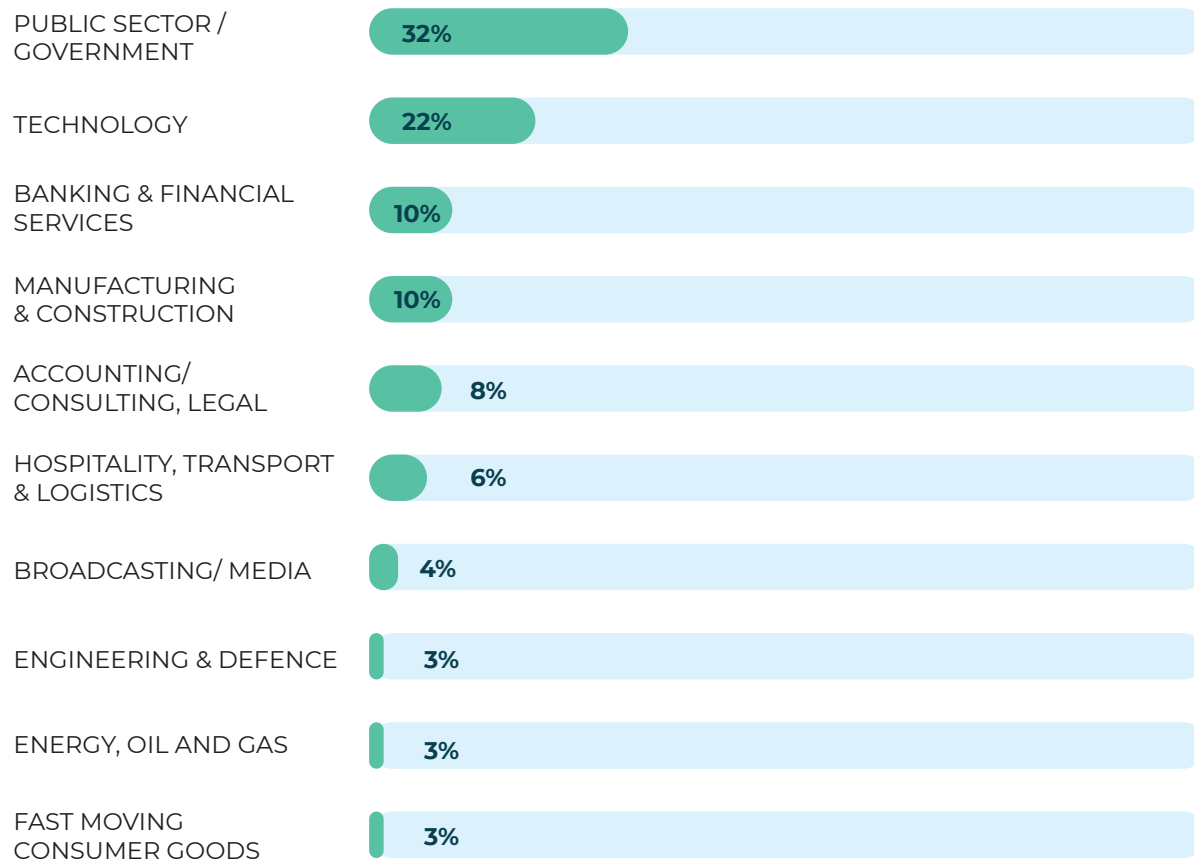
# About the respondents



# About the respondents

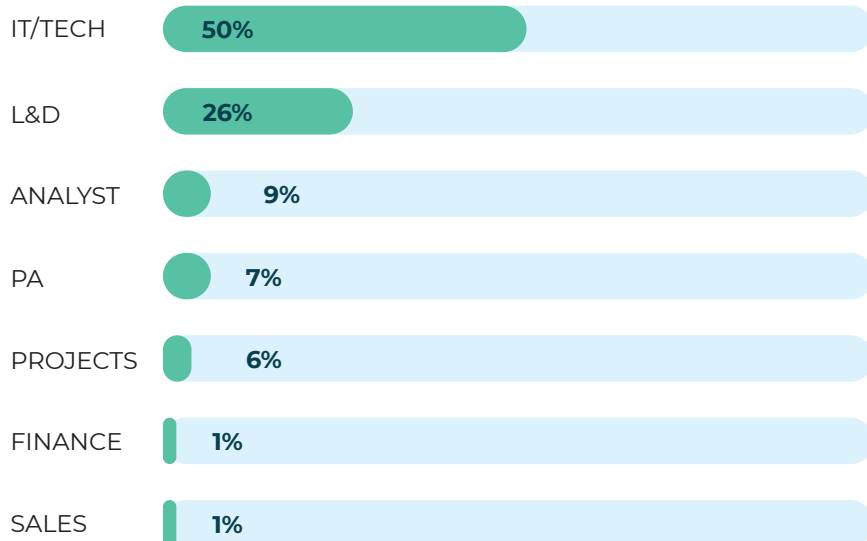
## Which industry do you work in?

The ratio of private sector respondents to public sector respondents was **70/30**.

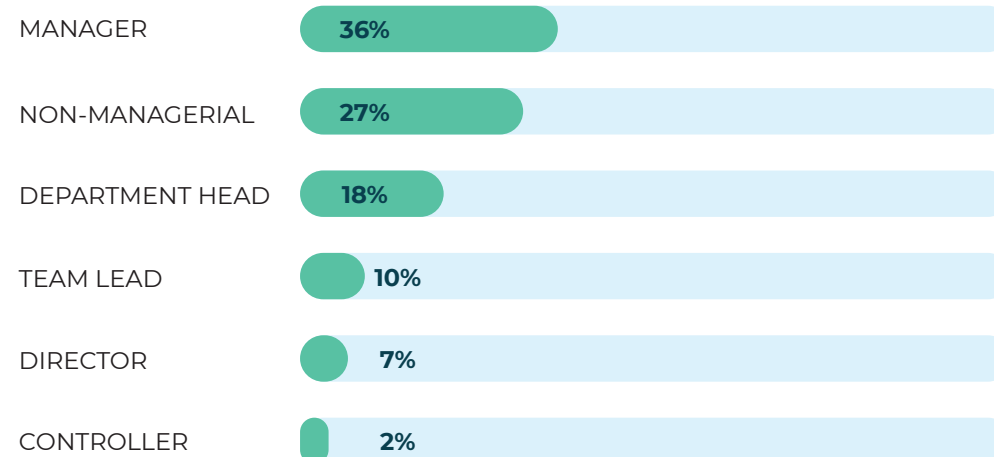


## Which department do you work in?

All those we surveyed were customers who either booked on behalf of others, or booked for themselves. **73%** of those surveyed were managers of people, at various levels.



## Which level are you within your organisation?







# Highlights of key findings

**We asked our respondents to reflect on training in their organisation, covering past, present and future.**

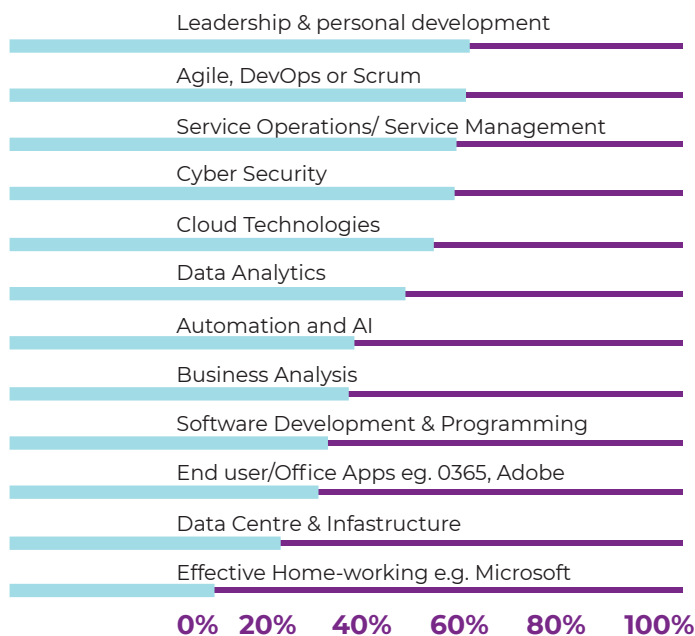


# Highlights of key findings

## We opened our survey by asking:

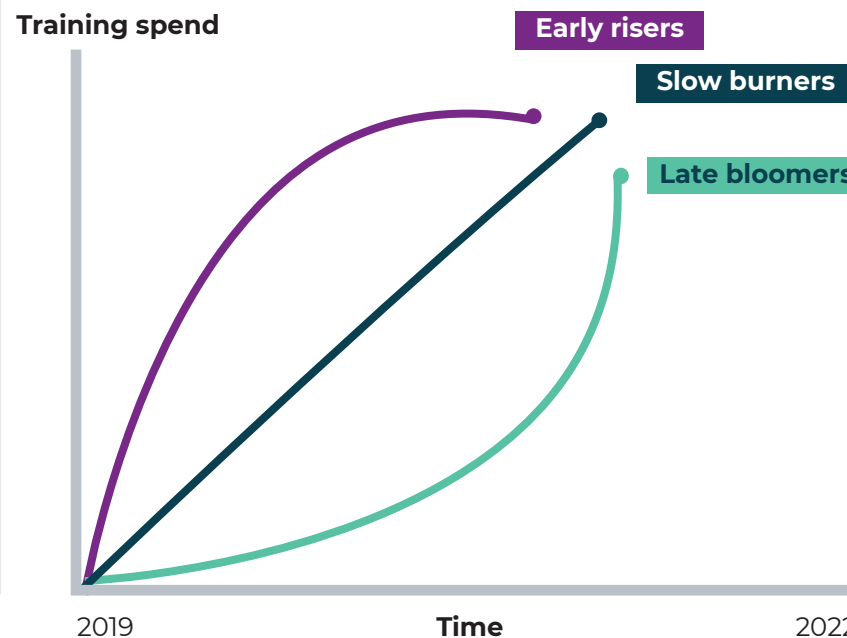
Which skill areas is your organisation planning to develop in the next 6 months?

### IN THE NEXT 6 MONTHS, WHICH AREAS DO YOU INTEND TO BOOK TRAINING FOR?



## Why these courses? Why now? What can this information teach us?

Let's understand why these courses have become so popular. These developments did not occur in a vacuum. By tracking their evolution from 2019 to now, we can categorise the course areas in the following way:



# Explaining the patterns

Pattern	Pandemic Period	Training Areas	Explanation of pattern
Early Risers	Mar 2020 – Nov 2020	Cloud & Virtualisation Cyber Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to quickly adapt to lockdowns</li> <li>• Need to keep business afloat</li> <li>• Remote collaboration</li> <li>• Rapid digitisation</li> </ul>
Late Bloomers	Nov 2020 – May 2021	Data, Analytics & AI Agile, Lean & DevOps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimisation of tech you adopted during pandemic</li> <li>• Being responsive to changes in industry &amp; customer demands.</li> <li>• Making sense of new data available to us thanks to new tech.</li> </ul>
Slow burners	Throughout the pandemic & beyond	IT Service Management Project & Programme Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No major skills gap as already managing tech adoption.</li> <li>• Need for more resource in response to volume, but skill-set already exists in organisation.</li> </ul>

These course areas haven't always been top priority for our customers: we can see it from the historical uptake. What we can see from our data is that the courses fall into 3 patterns, detailed in the table above.



## So, what can this information teach us?

What the data shows us is that the pandemic reshaped organisational training priorities because it reshaped organisations full-stop. Digitisation of areas that were previously handled “offline”, new customer expectations and a feeling that the technological advances were not only necessary but irreversible, all had a profound impact on how organisations understand L&D.

### 1) Flexibility > rigidity

The pandemic has made it acceptable (and even desirable, in some cases) for training to be booked on a shorter-term basis, in response to immediate needs.

### 2) “Events, dear boy, events” (Harold MacMillan, Prime Minister, when asked what he feared most)

Being flexible means that over the past few years, training needs have largely been dictated by events.

### 3) In conclusion: Organisations as a whole should proactively respond to industry trends, but make your people proactive too.

The Early Risers, Late Bloomers & Slow Burners are still the most popular courses: organisations will continue to respond to industry trends.

The momentum will be with organisations which encourage their employees and managers to proactively respond to industry trends, which means shifting some of the training onus from L&D to your employees.

## This is what you need to do with this information:

**1) Establish a culture of constant learning,** meaning that your people respond to experience and able to internalise lessons.

**2) Train for the unknown:** it's impossible to know what challenges may arise from day-to-day, but ensuring your people can adapt and improvise their existing skill-sets will ensure your organisation meets challenges rather than trailing behind them.

**3) Empowering the learner** Making sure learners have a stake in their own success is how you incentivise and encourage them to put their all into learning. How do you best empower a learner to own their development? We will cover how expertise in learning ensures learners engage including the modalities, learning theories and enablers that support this.



# Creating a learning culture

**“I am always doing that which I cannot do,  
in order that I may learn how to do it.”**

**– Pablo Picasso, Artist**



# Establishing a culture of constant learning

“A learning culture is a frame-of-mind in which an organisation places learning and improvement at the heart of what they do.”<sup>1</sup>

You may have heard the term “**learning culture**” before, but what it means for your organisation is largely shaped by what your organisation hopes to **achieve**.

When you have a learning culture, learning and **self-improvement** become second-nature. Opportunities for **growth** and learning are perceived as normal, day-to-day features of the workplace and not as separate “events”.



## Does my organisation already have a learning culture?

Consider how you think about training. Often, employers and employees alike consider training to be only an “**event**” which you book as and when it is needed.

The attitude towards learning is like that of a driver: most people get their cars serviced only when they are due to be serviced.

Sure, you could tinker with the car in the meantime and find improvements here and there, but most people prefer the “out of sight, out of mind” approach.

### The traditional, “event-based” attitude still predominates

At QA, we can see that this traditional approach still predominates amongst our customers.

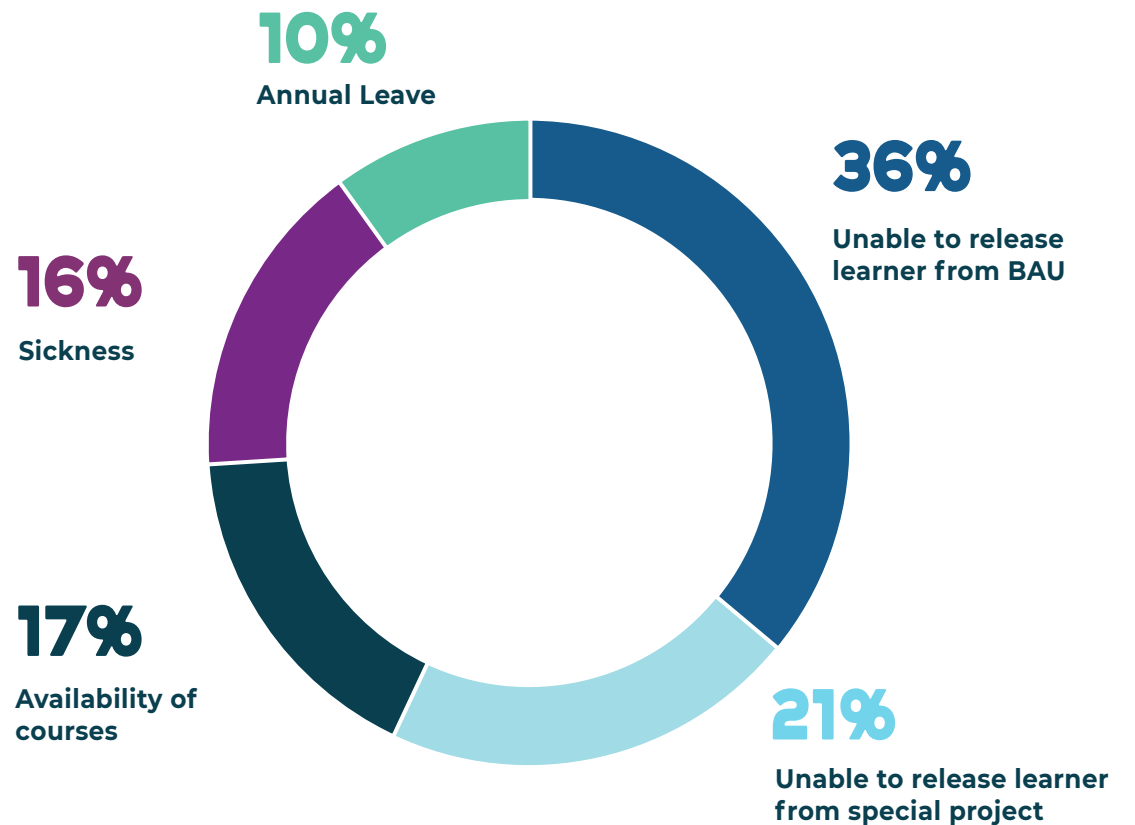
QA surveyed 300 managers and asked them whether they had postponed training in the last 6 months, and why.

Here are the results:

“**57% of respondents indicated that either business-as-usual or special business projects were the cause of a training delay, which suggests that they consider training to be an event that lies outside of “business-as-usual” or is secondary to business-critical interests.**

**With thinking like this, establishing a learning culture is very difficult.**”

### For what reasons have you needed to postpone training in the last 6 months?



## Recommendations: How can I establish a learning culture?

There are 3 components to establishing a learning culture: Attitude, Approach & Activation.



	Attitude	Approach	Activation
<b>Objective</b>	Shift from treating learning as an event to treating it as a continual process.	Make training a part of business-as-usual, in order to foster continual self-improvement and unconscious competence.	As learning is a process, the conclusion of a course or training programme does not equal the conclusion of the learning.
<b>Action</b>	Highlight that everyone has skills-gaps and that having them is not a sign of failure.	Implement a feedback system that allows managers and colleagues to share suggestions for improvement and highlight the need for their skills-development.	Create a workplace implementation plan with your employees. This plan should give them a chance to test their new skills, so try to put them on projects which will allow this.
<b>Rationale</b>	<b>40%</b> of employees report feeling uncomfortable asking for help with skills-gaps. <sup>2</sup>	Currently, only <b>28%</b> of employees report receiving any meaningful feedback on a weekly basis. <sup>3</sup>	Your people will need time to implement, practice and refine their new skills in order to turn them into action.



# Case study

## Learning culture – a matter of life and death?

Mistakes in aviation cannot be taken lightly, which is why, in the past, pilots were reluctant to voluntarily report incidents. Often, this was down to blame culture and embarrassment, which prevented pilots from asking for help and reporting incidents.

With passenger safety at risk, the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) established what they call a “just culture”.

Rather than penalising pilots and berating them, the FAA moved to encourage voluntary reporting and a “no harm, no foul” system.

This meant that if a pilot voluntarily reported an incident, Air Traffic control would call them, explain where they went wrong and aim to help them avoid the same mistake - rather than opening a criminal investigation.

In Denmark, the introduction of a similar system led to an increase in incident reports from 15 to 900 –not because there were more incidents, but because there were more reports.

That’s a lot of pilots openly seeking to learn from their mistakes, and safer skies as a result.<sup>4</sup>





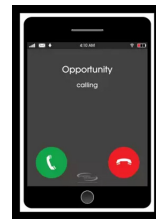
# Training for the unknown

**“The challenge of the unknown future is so much more exciting than the stories of the accomplished past.” - Simon Sinek, Author**



# Training for the unknown

By establishing a learning culture, you empower your people to respond to events around them and to turn them into learning points.



By training for the unknown, you empower your people to respond to events that are unexpected, new and even frightening.

How do you think about uncertainty in your organisation?

Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defence (1975-1977; 2001-2006) described uncertainty in the following way:

<p><b>Known knowns</b></p> <p>Things we are aware of and understand.</p>	<p><b>Known unknowns</b></p> <p>Things we are aware of but don't understand.</p>
<p><b>Unknown knowns</b></p> <p>Things we understand but are not aware of.</p>	<p><b>Unknown unknowns</b></p> <p>Things we are neither aware of nor understand.</p>

You might immediately think of the COVID pandemic, geopolitical uncertainty and environmental concerns, but uncertainty is about much more than headline-grabbing events.

**The march of technology:** it's not always clear what the next business changing innovation is going to be.

**Rules & regulations:** linking to technology but not dependent on it, the rules of the game can often change quickly. Think of GDPR, for example.

**Employee expectations:** who'd have thought hybrid working would be the standard 5 years ago?

**Customer expectations:** think of your local takeaways – did they all offer delivery 10 years ago, before the advent of apps? It's pretty likely that they do now!



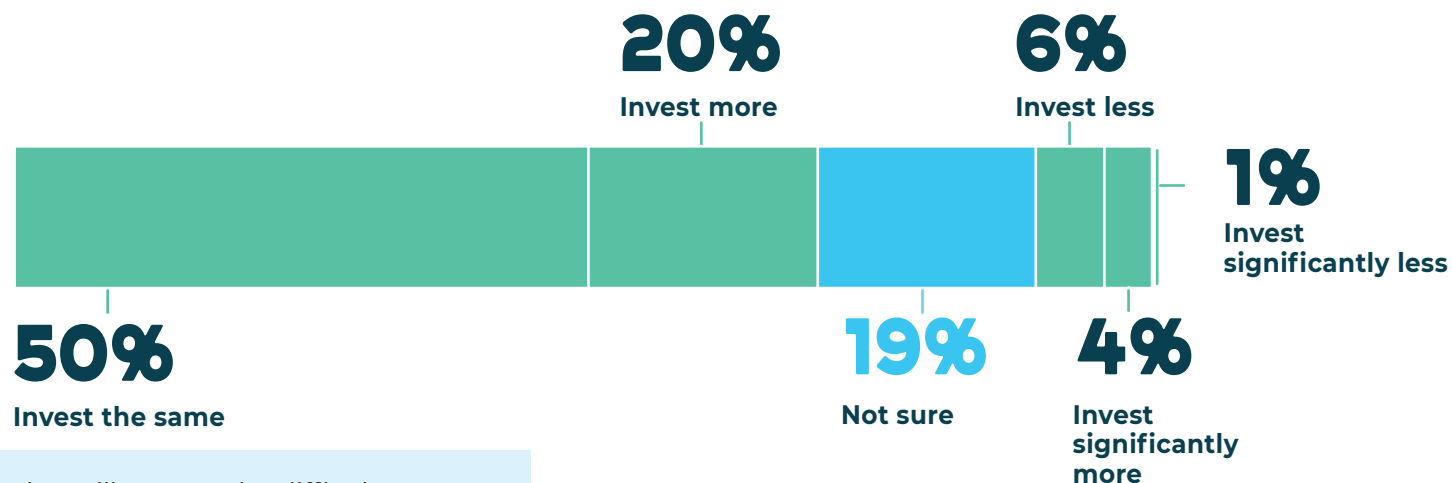


**Think to yourself:** what's the next big shift going to be? Where is it going to come from?

**You might find that this is a very difficult task...because nobody is psychic!**

We asked our 300 surveyed customers to attempt to project whether they would increase, maintain or decrease their training spend for the coming year:

### Training spend projection



**50%** of respondents indicated that they intended to maintain their training spend, as opposed to increasing or decreasing it. **19%** stated they were unsure.

The above illustrates the difficulty organisations face when trying to project their spend – precisely because there are so many unknowns, it is often safe to stick with what has worked before.

No one can predict exactly how much training budget will be the right amount. But that doesn't mean you can't change how that training spend is used - training for the unknown is not about creating an unlimited pot of money for future events, nor is it about trying to predict future trends.

## Recommendations: How to train for the unknown

Training for the unknown means ensuring that your people have the human, management, leadership and organisational skills to quickly react and adapt to new challenges. It's less about cramming new knowledge in to meet a new challenge or trying to anticipate the direction of change, and more about having the skills to deconstruct challenges as and when they arise.

### 1. Focus on transferable skills

#### Objective

Give your people skills that can be applied to different situations and contexts and make use of best practice frameworks which are designed to be tailored to changing circumstances.

#### Action

Prioritise training in areas such as Agile, Lean & DevOps, Project Management and Service Management methodologies all provide a framework for specific industries which can be tailored to emerging and new circumstances, whilst maintaining a focus on value for the customer.

#### Rationale

Transferable skills have a half-life of around 7.5 years (ie, it takes that long for half of what is learned to become irrelevant) whilst technical skills have a half-life of 2.5 years.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Technical skills are still important, so follow trends - but don't put all your eggs in one basket

**Objective** Pay attention to industry trends and the direction of travel, but don't select training based on predictions which may turn out to be false.

**Action** Pay attention to technological trends, but make sure you are also led by your customers and by industry.

Blindly chasing after each technological innovation will lead to time and resources being wasted.

**Rationale** Emerging trends can often turn out to be a "flash in the pan".

You might find that your customers, or industry as a whole, fall out of love with that new trend as quickly as they fell in love with it.

## 3. Follow industry best practice

**Objective** Emerging technologies such as cloud and cryptocurrency are often slow to be regulated. However, paying attention to recommendations from industry bodies regarding the compliance and security implications of these technologies can ensure you are as close as possible to the rules when they are written.

**Action** Keep an eye out for the latest training courses in emerging areas of technology. Industry bodies regularly release new courses in areas involving Cloud Technology, Sustainability and other emerging areas of tech.

**Rationale** You need to ensure that your entire organisation is sufficiently trained before adopting new technologies, as these will likely have implications for data protection, risk and compliance, as well as on the customer journey.



# Empowering the learner

**“The strongest principle of growth lies in human choice” – Mary Ann Evans (aka George Eliot), Author**



# Empowering the learner

The ultimate goal of training is to deliver results to your organisation, but this has to be done through the medium of your people.

Your organisation's needs will determine the type, scale and frequency of training you book, however it is easy to lose sight of the fact that your people need to be at the centre of your training strategy. Multiple surveys back this up:

- 1) The majority of employees value and want training (**87%<sup>6</sup>, 68%<sup>7</sup>, 82%<sup>8</sup>**, according to various surveys)
- 2) The majority of employees are not satisfied with the training on offer to them (**67%<sup>9</sup>, 61%<sup>10</sup>, 75%<sup>11</sup>**, according to various surveys)

## PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR A RETHINK?

### Ask yourself, is training something you do for your people, or something you do to them?

The gap between expectation and reality means that existing training efforts are not likely to generate the desired return-on-investment, or the other benefits of training which include retention (multiple surveys find that employees who are satisfied with learning & development at their company are less likely to leave).

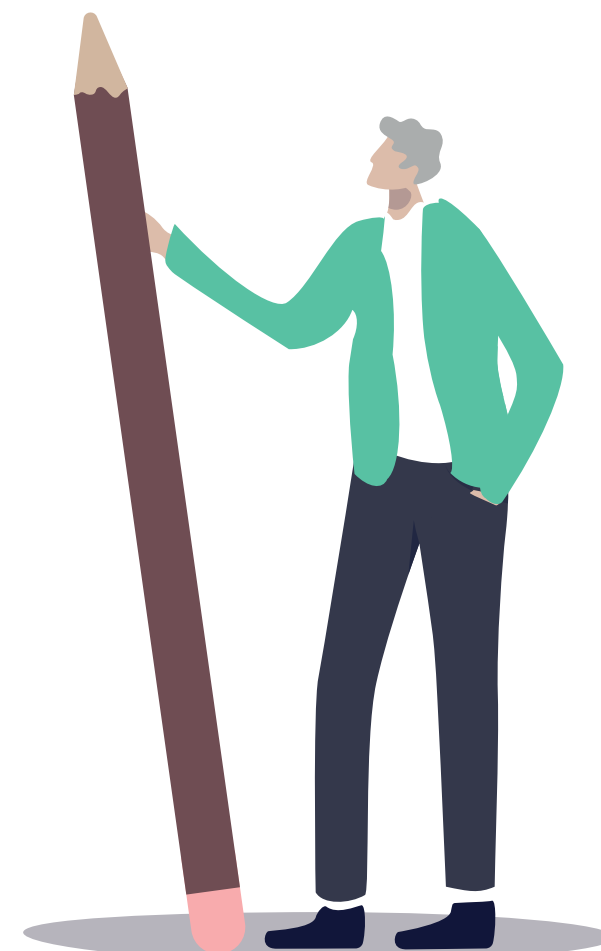
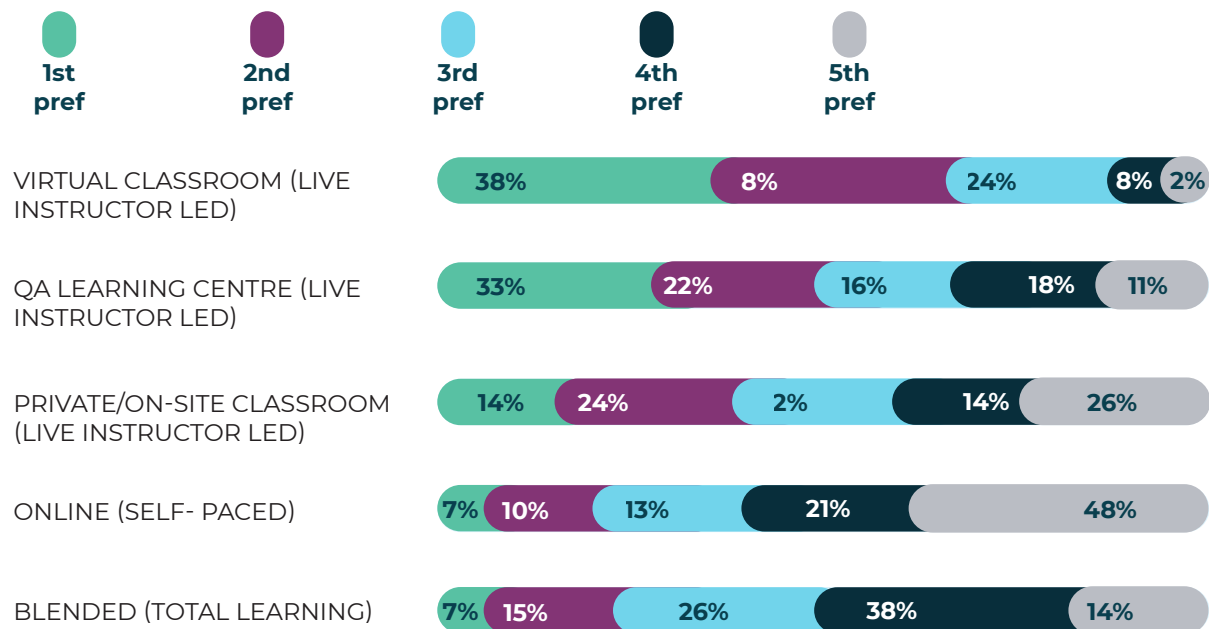
More than **80%** of respondents opted for instructor-led training. Does this reflect organisational preferences or employee preferences? A recent study found that **58%** of employees surveyed prefer to learn at their own pace<sup>12</sup>...this would appear to conflict with the above stated employer preferences.





## Favoured modalities

Please rank the following training options in order of preference



How do you align employee expectations with organisational needs?

### 1) Realise that your organisation's needs and your employees' needs are one and the same.

#### Objective

Your organisation may need to close a skills-gap, but you also need to ensure you retain your talent, so that the skills gap stays closed. Make sure that you align your need to close a skills-gap with your employees' aspirations and interests.

#### Action

Regularly check-in with your people regarding their aspirations and aim to ensure their training is aligned to their desired development pathway.

#### Rationale

To ensure full alignment, you need to encourage your people to approach you or your learning lead with ideas, rather than it being the other way around.

### 2) Give your people a stake in their own development

#### Objective

Allow your people to select not just the trajectory of their development, but how they get there, in order to motivate them and allow them to play to their strengths.

#### Action

Allow your people a choice in what they learn and how they learn, by letting them:

- Select their preferred modality
- Choose their own modules
- Join a reskilling programme

#### Rationale

Rationale: **91%** of learners want training to be personalised and relevant to them<sup>13</sup>



# Conclusion



# Conclusion

Organisations want to meet the challenges of a changed business & technology landscape, but often the pace of change is quick, and the nature of the change is often sudden.

In these circumstances, the onus can and must be shifted from being purely on an organisation's learning leads to being shared with the employees themselves.

This both empowers and motivates employees to own their development and be pro-active about learning, whilst organisations benefit from the higher efficiency and engagement generated as a result.

A renewed focus on transferable skills allows organisations to train for the unknown, fostering both business and employee resilience when new challenges arise.

Every organisation is different, and every individual is different. Training needs to be adapted to both of these realities.

Want to learn more about putting these recommendations into practice?

<https://www.qa.com/about-qa/contact/>



# Methodology

The QA Autumn Customer Survey (2022) was circulated from the beginning of August to the end of September. We received a total of 300 respondents. All respondents were customers who had made a booking with us, either for themselves or others.

In order to analyse past portfolio performance, we used historic learner numbers from the period 2019-2022.

Where appropriate, we have included industry statistics to supplement our findings. Each source is indicated with a reference and an endnote.

# Sources

1. Definition developed in consultation with QA learning experts
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