TRENDS IN
TRAINING
2020

New Methods for a
COVID-19 World

HR Daily Advisor

ABOUT THE 'TRENDS IN TRAINING 2020: NEW METHODS FOR A COVID-19 WORLD' SURVEY

The "Trends in Training 2020: New Methods for a COVID-19 World" survey was launched in January 2020 and gathered the insight of 333 HR professionals about how their companies approach training their employees.

BizLibrary and the *HR Daily Advisor* research team would like to extend our gratitude to all the professionals who chose to participate in the survey, as well as our readers, for their help in deepening our understanding of the state of training.

HR Daily Advisor research reports are based on surveys we conduct to discover the "real-world" status of policies and practices in areas of interest to HR managers.

We maintain strict rules of confidentiality, and survey data are reported only in the aggregate.

All percentages in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, which will sometimes make values add up to a little more or a little less than 100%. If you have any questions or comments about the "Trends in Training 2020: New Methods for a COVID-19 World" survey and this accompanying report, please e-mail media@simplifycompliance.com.

ABOUT BIZLIBRARY

BizLibrary is dedicated to HR and learning professionals and focused on providing the best and most complete online training solutions. Our content engages employees of all levels, and our learning technology is a dependable and progressive catalyst for achievement. Armed with our expert Client Success and Technical Support teams, clients are empowered to solve business challenges and impact change within their organizations. We make working with us easy and aspire to be your online learning partner.

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The rapid spread of COVID-19 has led to unprecedented business disruption around the world. It has also led to the erosion of the number one relied-upon method of training by employers: in-person presentations by staff. While many other methods are used, our research found that nearly three-quarters of employers rely on this approach to training.

Luckily, many organizations have been transitioning to digital training. Whether a company is centralizing training for a number of field offices from a central headquarters or staff are almost entirely remote, it's possible to manage companywide training programs from a distance. That ability is increasingly being leveraged by companies around the world grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to have unprecedented numbers of staff working from home.

However, with great change comes a lot of new learning for those that are providing the training. You have to make sure that you can match or improve your in-person training success. That means getting your digital training approach in sync with the needs of your organization and the abilities and attention span of your workers. You'll need to consider:

- How many ways you want to provide training, be it through a webinar, videoconference call, digital classrooms, or some combination of these and other solutions;
- Making sure that you are still reinforcing existing training while rolling out a training solution that has a high and lasting impact; and
- Ensuring that your employees have the time to learn new methods of training as well as the technical ability to seamlessly experience training.

While every organization is a little different, we can all benefit from the latest learning and development research. That is why we are pleased to share with you our latest report, "Trends in Training 2020: New Methods for a COVID-19 World."

Formal Training Programs

The majority of respondents (66%) indicated that they have a formal training program. Another 23% said they do not, and finally, 11% said they don't now but will in the next year and a half.

When we asked survey-takers which employee group they provided training for, the overwhelming majority (85%) said all employees. There were minimal answers for individual groups, with 5% of supervisors and managers receiving training, 5% of nonexempt employees receiving training, and 3% of exempt employees receiving training. The lowest training group was executives at 2%.

We also asked respondents what areas they cover during employee training. Top responses included new hire orientation (84%), sexual harassment (74%), discrimination (64%), and emergency procedures (60%). For a complete list, see the following table:

Areas Covered During Employee Training	
New hire orientation	84%
Sexual harassment	74%
Discrimination	64%
Emergency procedures	60%
Respectful workplace	59%
Safety/hazardous materials	55%
Workplace violence	54%
Leadership development	53%
Skills-based training	48%
Soft skills	42%
Attendance	42%
New manager training	41%
Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	32%
Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)	31%
Time management	28%
Project management	21%
Ergonomics	18%

With so many types of training out there, we wanted to understand which ones were used the most. The top-used platform, by a large margin, was in-person presentation by your staff (74%). Other top platforms include print materials (56%), an online training provider (48%), webinars (47%), and in-person presentations by experts outside of the company (44%).

Here is a complete table of these results:

Training Methods	
In-person presentation by your staff	74.23%
Print materials	56.44%
Online training provider	47.85%
Webinars	47.24%
In-person presentation by experts from outside the company	43.87%
Outside conferences/seminars	37.42%
Video/DVD-based materials	36.50%
Virtual meetings	35.28%
Mobile-/tablet-based materials	22.39%
Telephone/audio seminars	16.87%

We asked respondents to indicate how enthusiastic they believed their employees were with their current training programs. While only 12% indicated their employees were very enthused, a large percentage (46%) indicated their employees were somewhat enthused. Thirty-five percent said their employees were neutral about training, and only 8% said they were not enthused at all.

Survey-takers were also asked if they thought their employee training would increase in importance over the next 12–18 months. Nearly half (48%) said yes. Another 40% said they thought it would stay the same. Only 3% said they thought it would actually decrease. Finally, 10% said they were not sure.

Not every organization is lucky enough to have an employee dedicated to training. According to our research, 39% do not have even one employee. Another 35% said they do have at least one staff member dedicated to training, and 24% said they have a whole team dedicated to the effort.

We asked how many employees were dedicated to training for those who indicated they had more than one. The range of these team sizes was 2–800. The mean was 32, and the median was 6. We also calculated the percentage breakdown, which can be seen here:

Size of Training Team

1-5	47%
6-10	34%
11-100	14%
100+	5%
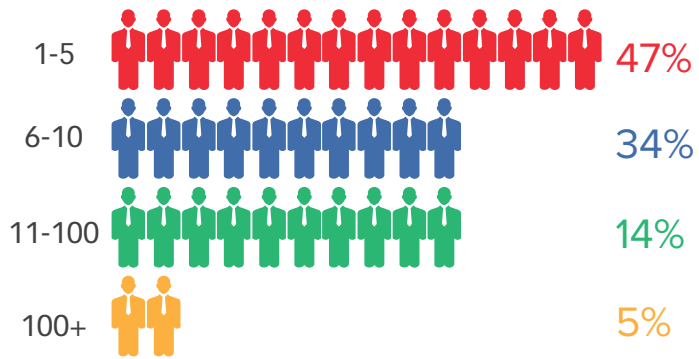
When asked which department manages training efforts, 58% said it was HR. Another 20% said it was their learning and development training department. Another 22% answered "Other." Here are some answers that were representative of common sentiments within those other comments:

- "Every department handles their own training."
- "Different aspects of training are handled by different departments."
- "Quality assurance."
- "A member of the C-suite."
- "Office managers."
- "Compliance team."
- "Operations."

When asked what percentage of their time was spent on training, the majority (59%) indicated 1%–20%. Far fewer (26%) indicated spending 21%–40% of their time on training. Another 8% said they spent 41%–60% on training, and negligible numbers of respondents spent any more time than that.

We really wanted to understand what training was most needed by respondents' organizations. Chief among them was leadership and supervisor skills (72%), followed by communication skills (60%), teambuilding (49%), and performance management (48%). Here is a complete list:

Where Training Is Needed Most

Leadership, supervisor skills	72%
Communication skills	60%
Teambuilding	49%
Performance management	48%
Job-specific skills	41%
Customer service skills	41%
Job skills training	39%
Problem-solving	37%
Safety compliance	31%
Safety and security	31%
Employee conduct	30%
HR compliance	28%
Legal/regulatory compliance	24%
Other (please specify)	4%

There were not a lot of other responses, but some of them included:

- "Fraud, critical thinking";
- "Trust";
- "Project management, time management, and how to organize projects"; *and*
- "Sales."

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOPICS **COVERED BY TRAINING**

We asked which professional development topics were covered in training for employees and management. For management, it's not surprising to see that the top two included leadership/management (97%) and dealing and coping with problem employees (97%). Ethics and integrity was the third most common (93%) topic that management was trained in.

The most common type of professional development training for employees (96%) was job-related skills, such as computers or customer service. Other top topics included ethics and integrity (91%) and company mission and values (91%).

Here are complete sets of results for both employees and managers:

Employee Professional Development Training

Job-related skills (computers, customer service, etc.)	96%
Ethics/integrity	91%
Company mission and values	91%
Time management	80%
Communication/presentation	78%
Soft skills	76%
Teambuilding	74%
Dealing/coping with problem employees	38%
Leadership/management	35%

Manager Professional Development Training

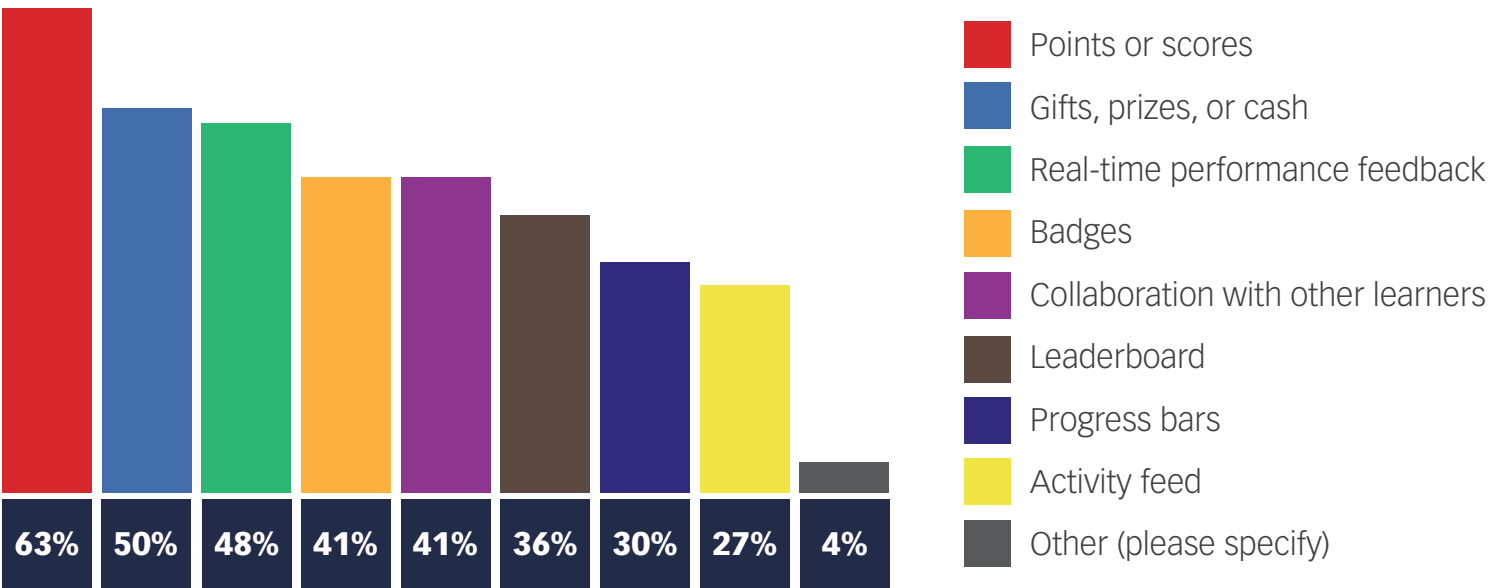|	
Leadership/management	97%
Dealing/coping with problem employees	97%
Ethics/integrity	93%
Teambuilding	90%
Company mission and values	88%
Communication/presentation	85%
Soft skills (including but not limited to problem-solving, flexibility, interpersonal skills, communication, teambuilding, and time management)	83%
Time management	81%
Job-related skills (computers, customer service, etc.)	63%

GAMIFICATION

The concept of using gamification to enhance training has been around for some time now and essentially involves the use of game mechanics like leaderboards, scores, and rewards to motivate employees to engage with training.

However, only 19% of respondents indicated they use gamification as part of their learning process. Another 62% said they do not. A small segment (11%) indicated that while they do not currently use gamification, they will in the next 12–18 months. Finally, 8% said they don't know.

For those who do use gamification, we asked what tools they used. The top tool used was points or scores (63%), followed by gifts, prizes, or cash (50%) and real-time performance feedback (48%). Here is a complete list:

Gamification Tools Used

Legend:
- Points or scores
- Gifts, prizes, or cash
- Real-time performance feedback
- Badges
- Collaboration with other learners
- Leaderboard
- Progress bars
- Activity feed
- Other (please specify)

Bar values: 63% | 50% | 48% | 41% | 41% | 36% | 30% | 27% | 4%

We wanted to understand how those who use gamification believe it impacts the effectiveness of training. Virtually all respondents (97%) were at least somewhat confident that it increases effectiveness of that training. Of that 97%, 47% were very confident. Only 3% said they were not confident in that statement.

We also asked about the effect that gamification had on employee engagement in training. Fifty-four percent were very confident it had a positive impact, and 42% were somewhat confident. Only 4% were not confident in that statement.

Social learning involves leveraging the social nature of people to enhance training. When respondents were asked if they made use of social learning in their training programs, 32% said they did. Another 52% said they did not. Ten percent indicated they do not now but will in the next 12–18 months. Finally, only 7% said they did not know.

Top types of social learning included peer-to-peer sharing of learning content (58%), group discussion boards (57%), and video chats and assessments (46%). Here is a complete list:

Types of Social Learning	
Peer-to-peer sharing of learning content	58%
Group discussion boards	57%
Video chats and video assessments	46%
Employee collaboration in creating training content	45%
Intranet platform	42%
Learners commenting on and rating learning content	27%
Crowdsourced questions and answers	23%
Subscribing to "expert" employees	14%

The most commonly used method of encouraging participation in social learning was very straightforward: 73% indicated having meetings explaining the social learning offering. Another 49% said they use a blog or an internal newsletter. The appointment of a social learning "champion" was less common (16%), and very few people used wikis (4%).

Finally, 8% of respondents indicated "other." Here are some of those responses:

- "Doing it promotes it."
- "We encourage our employees to participate in all levels of social learning."
- "Word of mouth."
- "This is part of teambuilding."

The majority of survey-takers (63%) said they felt social learning was being used effectively by employees. A minority (27%) believed social learning was not being engaged by very many employees, and a small minority (10%) felt it was just a distraction.

We also examined how confident survey-takers were that social learning can increase engagement in training. Forty-two percent were very confident, and another 52% were somewhat confident. Only 5% said they were not at all confident.

Along a similar vein, we asked how confident participants were that social learning can increase the effectiveness of training. Forty-three percent were very confident, and 52% were somewhat confident. Again, only a very small minority (4%) were not confident at all.

Personalized training involves creating tailored and unique training for the trainee. Fifty-nine percent of survey-takers indicated they use personalized training. Another 32% said they do not. Only 6% said they do not now but will in the next 12–18 months, and finally, 3% said they were not sure.

When asked which personalization tools survey-takers used, the top answers were coaching conversations (67%), suggested skills training based on job role (56%), surveys and assessments (53%), and training on demand (50%). The full data set is here:

Personalization Tools Used

#	Tool	%
1.	Coaching conversations	**67%**
2.	Suggested skills training based on job role	**56%**
3.	Surveys and assessments	**53%**
4.	Training on demand	**50%**
5.	Periodic postlearning/learning reinforcement	**36%**
6.	Recommending a sequence of training modules for the learner	**23%**
7.	Pretesting learners	**20%**
8.	Providing learners with a choice of formats for training	**19%**
9.	Using branching techniques	**5%**
10.	Other (please specify)	**4%**

As with other training approaches, we gauged participants' feelings about the efficacy of personalized training. Fifty-three percent were very confident that personalized training increased learner engagement. Another 42% were somewhat confident. As with other training methods, the minority (5%) felt it was not effective for increasing learner engagement.

We saw similar results when we asked how confident respondents were about how personalized training increased training effectiveness. Fifty-two percent said they were very confident, and 45% said they were somewhat confident. Only 3% said they were not confident at all.

Refresher training can help reinforce training, increasing its stickiness. Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated they used refresher training to one degree or another, with 22% saying they do not and 8% saying they will in the next 12–18 months.

More specifically, 37% of survey-takers indicated they do refresher training for all learners and learning activities. Another 25% say they do if the trainee requests it. Almost as many (24%) indicated they do if they observe a decline in skills.

We asked how survey-takers deliver their refresher training. In-person training was the top response, indicated by 65% of respondents. Other top answers included repeating the full training course (42%) and microlearning (34%). Only 16% said they e-mail questions about specific skills or behaviors.

Six percent answered "Other." Virtually every response was some form of "e-learning."

Refresher training can serve many purposes. Survey-takers indicated that the top areas of refresher training were very similar to the top areas of training in general. Recall that other than new hire training, the top reasons for training were sexual harassment (74%), discrimination (64%), emergency procedures (60%), and creating a respectful workplace (59%).

For comparison, the purpose of refresher training was job-related skills (63%), sexual harassment (59%), discrimination (52%), emergency procedures (51%), and creating a respectful workplace (45%).

A full set of results can be seen here:

Purpose of Refresher Training	
Job-related skills	63%
Sexual harassment	59%
Discrimination/antiharassment	52%
Emergency procedures	51%
Respectful workplace	49%
Safety/hazardous materials	44%
Workplace violence	42%
Soft skills	39%
Company values	39%
Attendance	27%
New hire orientation	23%
Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	18%
Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)	14%
Ergonomics	11%

It can be challenging to see the purpose of training if it's not effective. Despite that, 44% of respondents indicated they do not measure the efficacy of training. And while 30% said they do measure efficacy in some of their training, only 15% said they do so for all training. Finally, 11% answered they don't know, but they will in the next 12–18 months.

Even though such a large percentage of respondents don't measure the effectiveness of their training, 48% say that demonstrating the return on investment (ROI) of employee training to their executive team is very important. Another 39% said that such a demonstration is somewhat important. Only 13% said it was not a priority.

We explored another angle that might explain the disconnect between the importance of ROI and the measure of the effectiveness of training. We asked how confidant survey-takers are that their employee training program is worth the investment in time and resources. Sixty-one percent indicated they were very confident, and another 38% indicated they were somewhat confident. Confidence in the value of training seems to outweigh metric-based evidence of effectiveness.

We also asked respondents how they think their trainees feel about their training opportunities. The majority (62%) indicated they felt they were indifferent and that it was just part of the job. Another 25% indicated their trainees felt it was exciting and a new learning opportunity. Finally, 13% said they believed trainees found training to be mandatory and no fun.

We asked those who do measure training efficacy what measure they use. The top responses included trainee evaluation of the trainer (68%), supervisor or management input (60%), evaluation of employee performance after testing (52%), testing of trainees on content presented (46%), and application of training on employee behavior (41%).

Here is a full set of data:

Measuring Training Efficacy	
Trainee evaluations of trainer	68%
Supervisor or management input	60%
Evaluation of employee performance after testing	52%
Testing of trainees on content presented	46%
Application of new skills to the job	45%
Impact of training on employee behavior	41%
Recommendations for improvement in training	39%
ROI	36%
Number of employees who participated in the training	27%
Costs to deliver training	27%
Pretraining identification of business goals related to the training	21%
Quantification of value of new skills applied to the job	20%
Pretraining clarification of definition of success/effectiveness	17%
Return of expectation Kirkpatrick Model (ROE)	16%

Our research reveals a few interesting trends within the learning and development landscape. For example, we found differences between the existence of training programs and the number of people dedicated to delivering that training. We also found similar gaps between the perceived value of training and the amount of time dedicated to that training. Here we will explore the takeaways from these and other findings of interest.

Dedication of Staff and Time Toward Training

We found it interesting that even though a large majority of respondents indicated that they have a formal training program (66%), 39% of respondents do not have even one employee in place solely dedicated to training.

When also asked what percentage of their time was spent on training, the majority (59%) indicated 1%–20%. Far fewer (26%) indicated spending 21%–40% of their time on training. Another 8% said they spent 41%–60% on training, and negligible numbers of respondents spent any more time than that.

Takeaway: Clearly, organizations find training important. Some organizations struggle to get commitment from managers and leaderships, which can lead to poor dedication toward implementing training. Other organizations struggle to get the right training programs in place. Not all training programs work for all organizations, and a failure to match the needs of an organization to a specific training program can lead to poor outcomes. Still other organizations do not have enough resources available to put a proper training program in place. Finally, it's important to consider that some organizations might have more than one or all three of these challenges.

The Challenge of Enthusiasm

This survey shows organizations are struggling to find ways to create organic enthusiasm for their current training program. When asked to indicate how enthusiastic they believed their employees were with their current training programs, 43% responded by saying their employees are either "neutral" or "not enthused at all."

When asked how they think their trainees feel about their training opportunities, the majority (62%) indicated they felt they were indifferent and that it was just part of the job. Another 25% indicated their trainees felt it was exciting and a new learning opportunity. Finally, 13% said they believed trainees found training to be mandatory and no fun.

Takeaway: When only 25% of trainees actually show excitement for their training, organizations clearly need to consider ways to create engaging training. One major factor between engaging training and unengaging training involves the purpose of the training. When organizations largely rely on training to solve or prevent compliance issues, they miss a valuable opportunity: professional development. We know that employee enthusiasm and engagement thrive best when training is presented as an opportunity that employees can use to further their professional development. Trainees will think

of their training as a genuine improvement of their profession rather than a box they just have to tick.

Confidence in the Value of Training Seems to Outweigh Metric-Based Evidence of Effectiveness

This research shows that measurements surrounding the efficacy of training are somewhat lacking. For example, 44% of respondents indicated they do not measure the efficacy of training. And while 30% said they do measure efficacy in some of their training, only 15% said they do so for all training.

Even though such a large percentage of respondents don't measure the effectiveness of their training, 48% say that demonstrating the ROI of employee training to their executive team is very important. Another 39% said that such a demonstration is somewhat important. Only 13% said it was not a priority.

Out of the 30% of respondents who said they do measure training efficacy, 68% of them said the top measure they used was trainee evaluation of the trainer. Only 16% of respondents use the return on expectation (Kirkpatrick Model).

We asked how confident survey-takers are that their employee training program is worth the investment in time and resources. Sixty-one percent indicated they were very confident, and another 38% indicated they were somewhat confident.

Takeaway: If demonstrating the ROI of training to executives is important, then being able to demonstrate that efficacy seems clear. So why the disconnect? It is likely that company size plays a role, with small to midsize organizations not having the available data and/or resources to statistically show that ROI. Larger organizations, conversely, can dedicate both time and resources and draw upon solid data sets to distinctly illustrate the ROI of their training efforts.

We looked at a number of comparative data points within the research between company size and measurement of efficacy to illustrate this point.
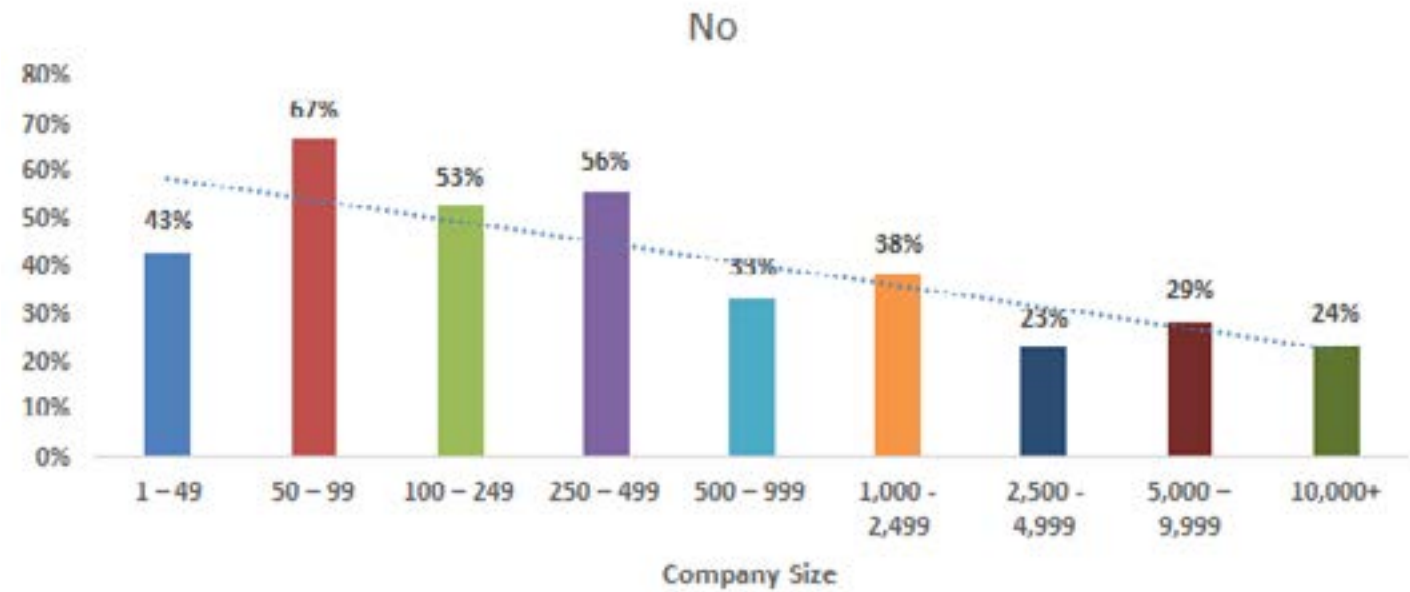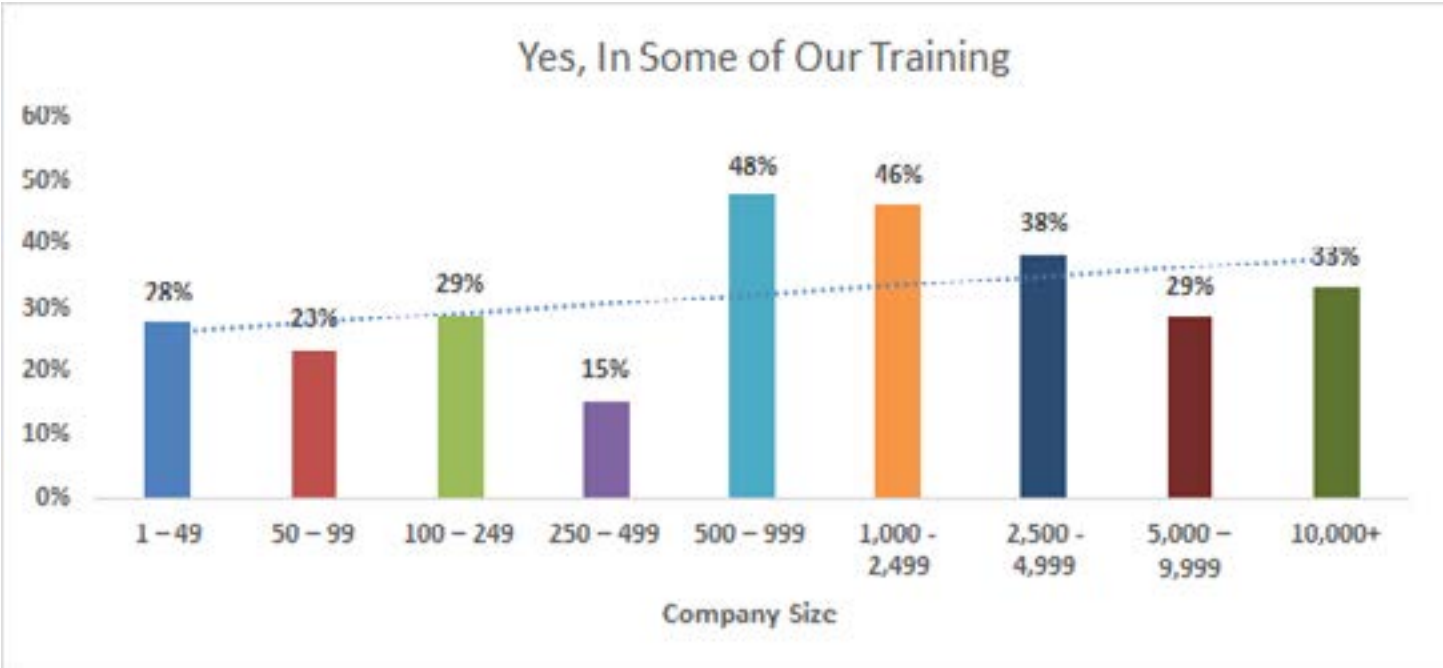
Measurement of Efficacy by Company Size

The following charts clearly show that large companies are more likely to measure efficacy of either all training or some training.

Yes, In All Training

| Company Size	Percentage
1 – 49	18%
50 – 99	7%
100 – 249	13%
250 – 499	10%
500 – 999	5%
1,000 – 2,499	15%
2,500 – 4,999	23%
5,000 – 9,999	43%
10,000+	29%

Yes, In Some of Our Training

No

Top Measure of Training Efficacy by Company Size

When the top measure of training efficacy by respondents is broken down by company size, we can see an immediate trend. Clearly, trainee evaluations of trainer is the most popular type of training efficacy measurement.

Company Size	Top Training Effectiveness Measurement
1–49	Trainee evaluations of trainer (67%)
50–99	Testing of trainees on content presented (56%)
100–249	Supervisor or management input (81%)
250–499	Evaluation of employee performance after testing (57%)
500–999	Trainee evaluations of trainer (73%)
1,000–2,499	Trainee evaluations of trainer (78%)
2,500–4,999	Trainee evaluations of trainer (87%)
5,000–9,999	Trainee evaluations of trainer (80%)
10,000+	Trainee evaluations of trainer (77%)

Trainee Evaluations of Trainer
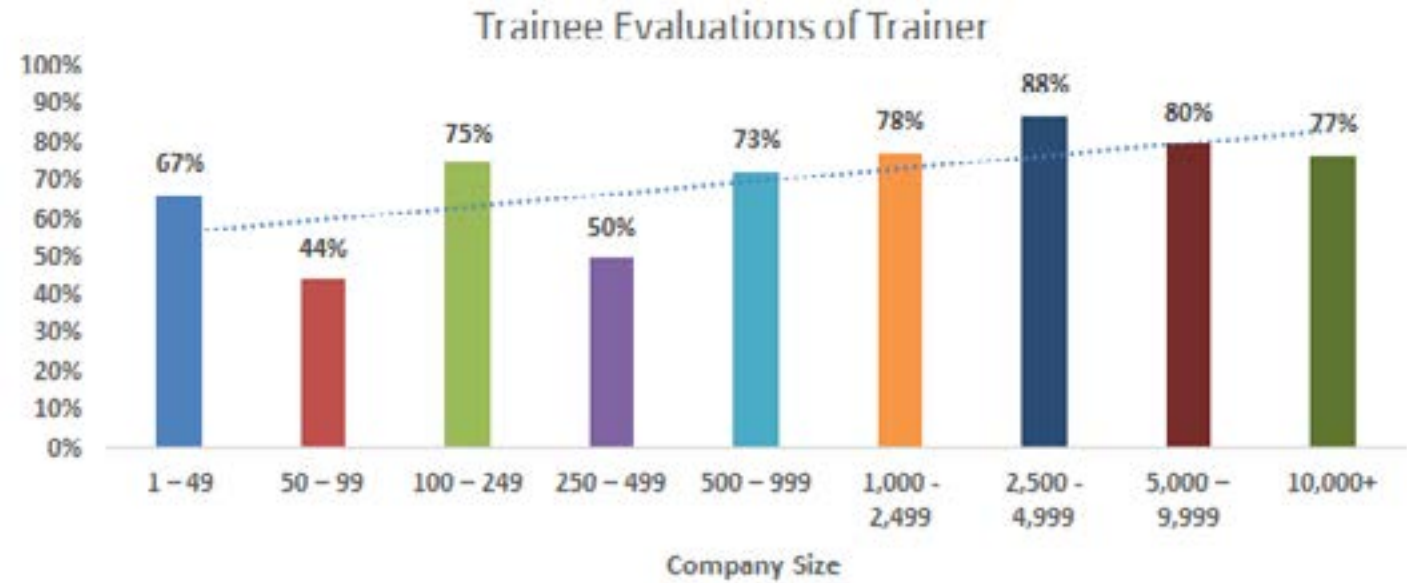
## Demonstrating ROI of Employee Training to Executive Teams by Company Size

Trends in the following charts show that there is a general trend of increased importance in demonstrating ROI of employee training to the executive team based on company size.

Very Important

Somewhat Important

Not a Priority

Confidence in Worth of Dedication of Time and Resources for Training by Company Size

The data show that the larger companies are, the more seriously confident they are in the ROI of dedicating time and resources toward training. As you can see below, the trend for "very confident" rises as companies get larger, while the trend for "somewhat confident" decreases as companies get larger.

Confidence in Worth of Dedication of Time and Resources for Training by Company Size
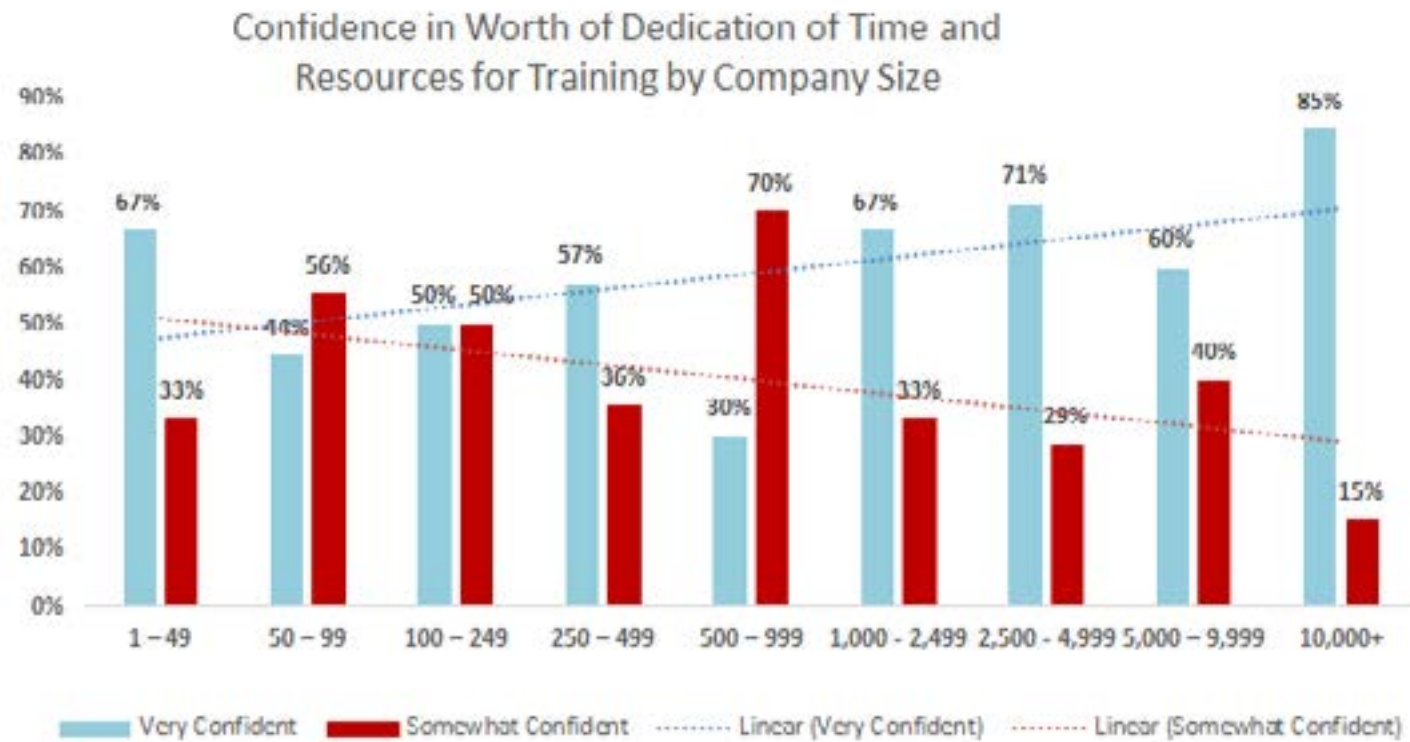
Final Thoughts

One concerning conclusion from this research is that many organizations only view training as a means to avoid costly lawsuits. Dedicated training professionals, however, know the value of quality training. They know how investing in their employees' professional growth creates knowledge that lasts, increases their bottom line, and reduces employee turnover.

The participants in our Trends in Training 2020 survey report to a variety of levels within their organization. Thirty percent report to C-suite staff members other than the CEO, and 28% report to the CEO. Twenty-one percent report to HR, 8% report to a manager/supervisor, and only 4% report to a board. Another 10% report to various other positions.

Most of the respondents (49%) are managers. Another 22% are VPs or higher, and the same number are staff. Only 7% indicated they were supervisors.

The majority of survey-takers (47%) have one office in the United States/Canada. Another 39% have multiple U.S.-based offices. Twenty-one percent of respondents maintain a global workforce. Finally, only 6% operated out of one office outside of the United States/Canada.

Within the United States, 20% of participants are located in the South, and another 20% are located in the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic. Seventeen percent are located in the East Central region, and 13% are located in the Far West. Finally, 10% come from the Central/Rocky Mountain/Southwest region.

The bulk of survey participants (70%) work at organizations that employ fewer than 500 employees, with 36% at organizations with fewer than 100 employees. Eight percent reported from companies that employed 500–999 people, while 10% of respondents work at organizations with 1,000–4,999 employees. Finally, 11% work at enterprise-scale businesses that employ more than 5,000 workers.

We asked respondents how many employees were in their department. Most (41%) had 2–5 employees. Another 22% had only 1, and 16% had 6–10. Nine percent had between 11 and 20 employees in their department, and 12% had more than 20.

The top industries represented in the response pool were health care and social assistance (14%); manufacturing (14%); professional, scientific, or technical services (10%); and finance and insurance (7%).

Here is a complete list of industries:

Industry	%
Health care and social assistance	14%
Manufacturing	14%
Professional, scientific, or technical services	10%
Educational services	9%
Finance and insurance	7%
Public administration	5%
Retail trade	3%
Utilities	3%
Construction	3%
Transportation and warehousing	3%
Accommodation or food services	3%
Other services (except public administration)	2%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	2%
Information (media, data, telecommunication)	2%
Wholesale trade	2%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	2%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	1%
Real estate and rental and leasing	1%
Administrative and support services	1%
Management of companies and enterprises	1%
Waste management/remediation services	<1%