

Global HR Survey: People Development for Business Growth



Foreword

This study shows how adaptive and agile organisations have been in navigating the turbulence of the pandemic to date. In business terms, responses given by 2,500 learning and development leaders suggest a sea-change from preparedness to progression, particularly as many have embedded digital ways of working across their organisations.

As a professor of coaching and behavioural change, I've been impressed by how companies large and small have utilised new technologies to achieve effective, measurable coaching outcomes. What used to involve inefficient hours or days of travel to face-to-face sessions has been replaced by new more impactful ways of working. Optimising technological innovation and the growing science around coaching has enabled us to change people development.

As a researcher, who has published over 100 scientific papers on behavioural change, I know and understand the power of coaching as a force for good, supporting talent development and employee retention – and from these, wider business transformation which flows from creating more agile, reflective and dynamic workforces. Digital technologies are democratising coaching in a way few people could have previously imagined. As we continue to find our path through this phase of change, I'm heartened to see the positive role coaching is playing.



Prof. Jonathan Passmore
Senior Vice-President of Coaching at CoachHub



One of the most comprehensive post-Covid-19 surveys of learning and development experts.

This substantial study examines how businesses are adapting their people development programmes in response to a seismic shift to remote working, coupled with continued uncertainty.

It assesses whether new technology in people development is a positive way to manage uncertainty, or a reluctant response to restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

The results highlight surprising disparities between regions and markets in their short- and long-term attitudes to people development for 2022. There are marked contrasts in budgets and methods of delivering training, mentoring, coaching and employee wellbeing – and choices between recruitment versus reskilling and retraining.

It provides a useful measure of the level of uncertainty from an HR perspective – and insights into how companies are responding to a sense of insecurity through people management and technology.



Summary

What key learnings are most relevant to people management professionals?

- **Corporate growth vs stability:**

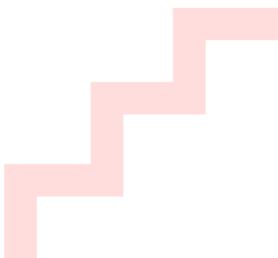
The survey highlights a significant mismatch between high expectations of commercial growth and a low likelihood of business stability. It indicates optimism in learning and development budgeting with less certainty on how that money might be best invested. The data points to a return to enhancing developmental skills, rather than technical ones, and an erosion of the traditional line between so-called hard and soft skills: i.e. competence over capability.

- **Recruitment, redundancy and reskilling:**

Over half of those surveyed will be recruiting while fewer than 20% forecast redundancies. With 50% of mid-sized businesses planning a restructure, the level of underlying uncertainty is predicted to increase. There is a clear focus on upskilling existing staff – with much of 2021 having been about helping them adapt to and adopt new methods and technologies. For 2022 the survey predicts a shift from managing present challenges to a focus on the future: i.e. confidence above coping.

- **Behavioural skills above technical capability:**

The survey confirmed that managing uncertainty requires a set of behavioural skills more than teachable technical capability. The larger the organisation, the less tailored these support packages seem to be. Many initiatives are company-wide, with few having learning and development programmes fully developed for each individual alone. An increasing number of organisations have democratized coaching to a wider cross-section of their workforce, where traditionally it was reserved for top-tier leaders. Both broad learning programmes and highly targeted interventions like coaching have changed in appeal and availability through embracing digital channels of delivery.



Key finding 1: Growth vs Stability

Seventy per cent of businesses expect growth from 2021 and 85% anticipate that growth to accelerate next year. Yet only 24% predict a stable outcome from this year's performance, with expectations for stability falling to just 12% in 2022.

In contrast to continued uncertainty, or perhaps in response to it, the vast majority (92%) of the 2,500 decision-makers surveyed predicted training and development budgets will grow in the year ahead, with around half of those expecting 'a large increase'. The biggest increases are planned in Singapore, South Korea, China and the USA. The least amount of increases are in France and Japan.

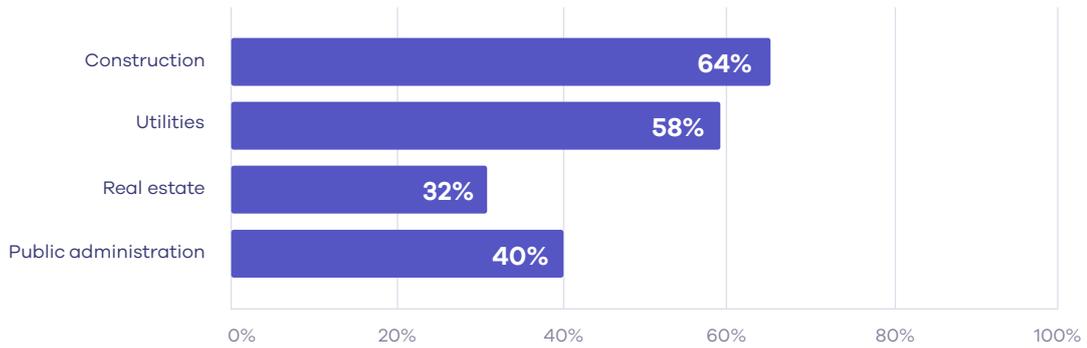
Learning and development strategies were formally discussed quarterly in a third of the organisations polled, for 25% of companies it has become a monthly task – and just 10% said it was still reviewed annually.

The three most popular techniques in training and development remain e-learning (67%), on the job learning (60%) and coaching (51%). The vast majority of coaching is now taking place online, with very few external coaches conducting face-to-face sessions. Those from Italy, Spain and the UK are the least likely to want a return to a face-to-face approach in delivering training and development.

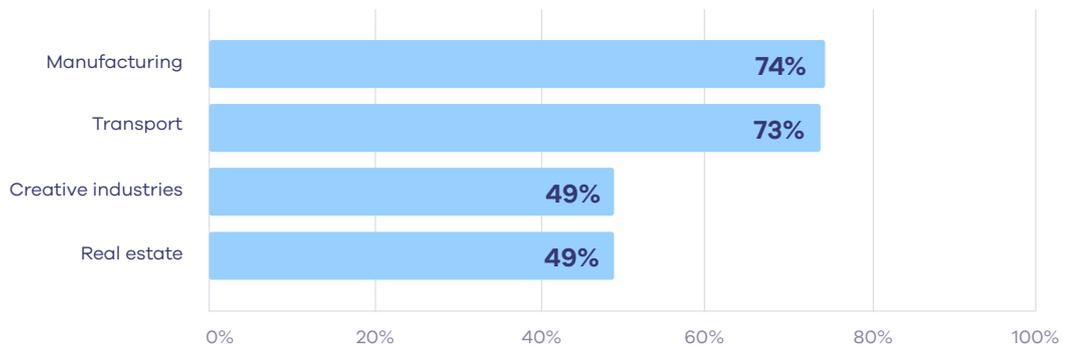
Respondents said in the past 18-months there had been an increase in employee questions relating to demand for greater flexibility (47%), followed by employees looking for a career change and new opportunities (36%). The number of employees struggling with burnout or wellbeing issues was reportedly 35%, the highest incidence being in south-east Asia. This may be due to periods of confinement being imposed earlier, and for longer than in other territories.



Interest in coaching by industry



Interest in elearning by industry



In summary, the disparity - between a positive outlook for profits and productivity – and an extremely low expectation of any foreseeable return to stability, creates challenges for people development professionals. It indicates optimism in learning and development budgeting with less certainty on how that money is best invested. The majority (77%) of respondents agreed there is a greater need to train and develop employees than before the pandemic, with just 19% saying there is no need for a change. With the move to online for upskilling and coaching looking an increasingly permanent shift, and as more people become adept at remote working, it's thought greater emphasis will be on behavioural skills, rather than technical ones: i.e. capability not simply competence.

The study validates a growing awareness of the importance of behavioural skills. In reaction, companies will increasingly consider training in this field, which can benefit from digital coaching.



Key finding 2: Recruitment, Redundancy and Reskilling

Black swan events create uncertainty. There is nothing new in that. But terrorism, political shifts and even global financial crises rarely force the scale and pace of change we've witnessed in recruitment and training throughout this pandemic. This survey investigates how people development may be a tool to help manage and navigate this sense of insecurity.

Around half the 2,500 people surveyed reported they'd be hiring new people, and a similar number plan to increase internal recruitment. In contrast, 19% are looking at making redundancies next year. Almost 50% of the businesses contacted with 2,500-5,000 employees are expecting to restructure their workforce in 2022.

Most businesses (68%) still prefer to train and develop an existing employee for a new role, with only 30% saying they'd opt to hire a new person. It logically follows that two-thirds of people development leaders said they're planning on upskilling people to new processes and technologies next year, while 50% plan to reskill people with completely new capabilities.

The choice to recruit or retrain divides large and small organisations and regions: 42% of global companies with over 100,000 staff prefer to hire a new person with the right skills, while almost three-quarters of those in companies with 1,000-5,000 employees choose to reskill and retrain their existing people. This runs counter to assumptions that organisations with the largest talent pools might opt for internal mobility, particularly as 40% of the biggest companies surveyed say they struggle to hire suitable candidates in general. Those in agriculture are most likely to hire afresh, while education and financial services default to people development. Australia, Italy and Spain choose to upskill more than most nations, while China and Japan are selecting new staff where they can.



Preference to hire a new employee with desired skill set over training and developing desired skills amongst existing employees



In summary, reskilling and retraining people in a world of greater remote working continues as a priority in 2022. Helping them face up to uncertainty and find their own answers to those challenges, personally and professionally. With half of all mid-sized enterprises planning a 2022 restructure, it's likely that next year will be more about delivering change than adapting to it. i.e. improving above coping.

While there can be resistance to recruit internally - notably from managers, who may not want to let a good team member go - companies should embrace an open culture of mobility and proactively recognize the role of leadership in people development.



Key finding 3: Behavioural skills above technical capability

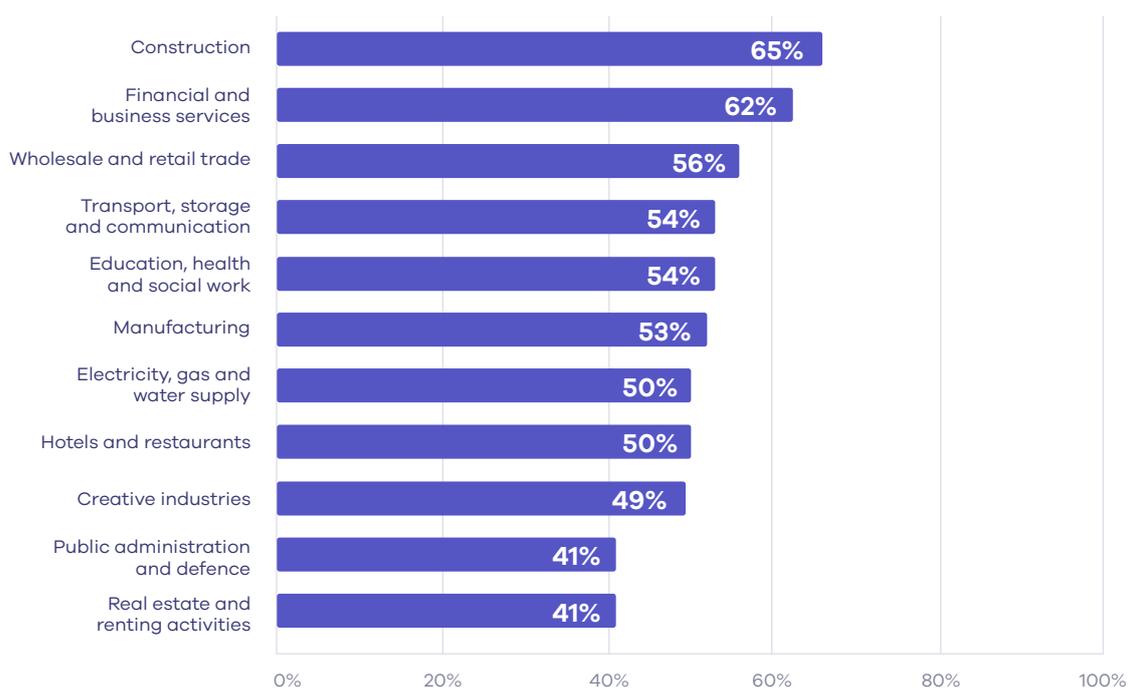
The survey confirmed that managing uncertainty requires a set of behavioural skills more than teachable technical capability. It involves adapting to change – from working practices to production methods. The data shows it affects businesses from finance and farming equally yet varies regionally.



A quarter (25%) of employees in the Nordics have received extra learning and training in the past 18-months to specifically help them with uncertainty; 55% in Singapore and 54% in ANZ have received the same, but to cope with wellbeing. The larger the organisation, the less tailored these support packages seem to be. Many initiatives are company-wide, with only 16% of UK respondents and 15% in the US having learning and development programmes fully developed for each individual alone. Financial and business services organisations are most likely to say their learning and development programmes are adapted to the individual, whilst the transport and logistics sector tailors to team level.

Forty per cent of those surveyed said their development plans are built around a blend of technical and behavioural skills for individual roles. Over a third said their development programmes focused on individual technical responsibilities, and 23% said theirs was built around behavioural skills alone.

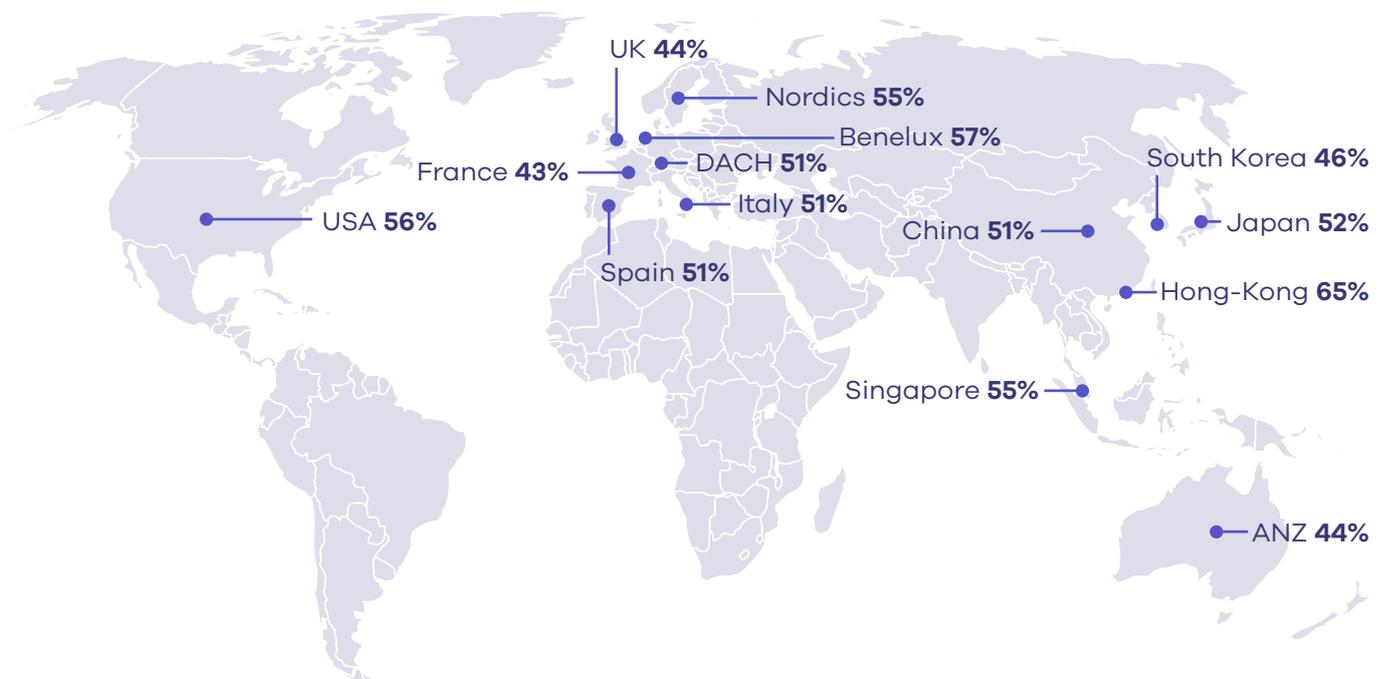
Top industries using individual coaching for people development



Coaching using external experts, and to a lesser degree internal resources, continues to grow as a key way to deliver behavioural change. 56% of those surveyed said they've already embraced individual coaching as part of their people development, with 39% thinking about it. 60% of those in companies with over 100,000 employees are already using individual coaching vs just 49% in companies with 1,000-2,500 employees.

Employees often saw coaching using internal resources as some form of corrective action and indistinguishable from mentoring. Using an external coach was viewed as a high-value method of developing behavioural skills and new ways of working – and coping with uncertainty through providing a confidential forum.

Worldwide use of coaching as a tool for training and development



The most important skill in the face of uncertainty is to learn how to learn. Uncertainty will remain the rule more than the exception in a VUCA world, therefore both organisations and individuals must update their skill sets permanently to adapt and innovate.



Methodology and international coverage

2,472 senior decision-makers in charge of organisational training and development were surveyed. The fieldwork took place between 27th September and 4th October 2021.

A leading, independent market research agency (Atomik research) employing Marketing Research Agency certified staff carried out the work in line with the MRS code.

Respondents by region were:

ANZ	80
Benelux	100
China	51
DACH markets	190
France	150
Hong Kong	20
Italy	100
Nordics	60
Japan	50
Singapore	20
South Korea	50
Spain	100
United Kingdom	500
USA	1,000

Conclusions and predictions

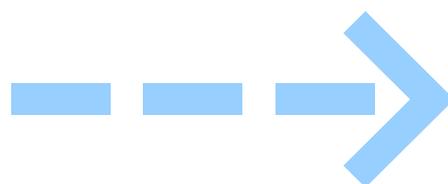
The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted old organisational vulnerabilities and created new ones. Most companies have responded to a shift in ways of working by embracing novel technologies. But it's clear they need to build sustainable digital businesses or risk becoming obsolete; beginning with their people, not simply the systems those individuals rely on.

Learning and development professionals are now challenged with leading this transition – through empowering employees. New skills delivered in radically different ways, focussing on improving customer experience, efficiency and workflow – ultimately enabling sustainability and growth as we emerge into a new year that appears anything but normal in outlook.

The survey suggests the toughest task for 2022 will be this evolution of HR functions and their ability to enable teams to succeed not simply survive. The challenges of customer satisfaction, shareholder value, compliance and attracting new talent are not new. The ways learning and development professionals will meet and beat them, however, are.

Employee development professionals are being asked to support strategic organisational transformations, improve leadership skills and increase productivity. While recruitment remains tough, businesses of all shapes and sizes are seeking new ways to invest in their existing teams to develop their talents and support wider wellbeing. They're also being asked to put metrics in place to measure those methods, with limited lived experience or data to work with.

One important component will be an increase in individual coaching. 56% of those surveyed have already embraced it, with 39% saying they are thinking about it. Whilst face to face 'executive coaching' was once seen as a highly leveraged but sometimes expensive preserve of senior leadership teams, delivering the same outcomes digitally has democratized it, permeating deeper through organisations and their structures. It's one of many tools vital to overcoming the challenges we can see, and to face the new ones that are just beyond our business horizon.





About CoachHub – its place and purpose

CoachHub is the leading global talent development platform that enables organisations to create a personalised, measurable and scalable coaching programme for the entire workforce, regardless of department and seniority level. By doing so, organisations are able to reap a multitude of benefits, including increased employee engagement, higher levels of productivity, improved job performance and increased retention.

CoachHub's global pool of coaches is comprised of over 3000 certified business coaches in 70 countries across six continents with coaching sessions available in over 60 languages, to serve more than 500 clients. CoachHub's programs are based on advanced R&D from our Coaching Lab, led by Prof. Jonathan Passmore and our Scientific Board.

CoachHub is backed by leading tech investors, including Draper Esprit, Holtzbrinck Ventures, Partech, RTP Global, Signals Venture Capital and Speedinvest. In September 2021, CoachHub acquired French digital coaching pioneer MoovOne to build a global champion focused on jointly democratising coaching.

For more information, visit
www.coachhub.com