



LEARNING TO LEAD.

The Digital Potential.

Employers are at risk of making tech-savvy managers 'switch off' from learning new skills with dated digital technologies, according to a survey of 1,184 UK managers. The research was conducted in summer 2015 by CMI and Oxford Strategic Consulting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current use of digital in management development

- Digital has become ubiquitous in management and leadership development, with 97% of managers spending at least one day a year on digital learning. On average, managers spend eight days per year using digital learning.
- Usage is moving towards a model of 'grazing', with managers learning in short bursts: 66% of managers say their digital learning sessions normally last less than an hour.
- 65% of managers say they learn at home in their own time, compared to 54% who learn in the workplace in working hours. While managers regard having control over the time, pace and location of their learning as key benefits, this raises the question of whether learning is being squeezed out of the workplace.
- Digital learning is not keeping up with the expectations of younger managers. The under-35s are the age group least likely to embrace digital when learning to lead: only 11% prefer digital over face-to-face learning, compared to 17% of older managers. The lack of social connectivity is a key factor.
- There are differences between the sexes when it comes to their attitudes to digital learning. Male managers are more likely to agree that digital is the best way to develop managers – 29% agree, compared to 17% of women. Men are also more likely to think that employers will rely more on digital in the future.

Challenges and barriers

- 80% of managers say that their organisation is failing to use digital to improve the quality of management development. 37% say development is poorly aligned with their organisation's objectives, fundamental to realising value from learning and development.
- Instead, employers are largely focused on cost, at the expense of maximising the potential of digital. Reducing costs is the number one reason for organisations to invest in digital learning, identified by 69% of managers.
- Only 20% of managers said that digital learning in their organisation is accredited. This represents a missed opportunity to recognise

progression in managers' learning and validate their skills. Other research has shown the benefits of such external recognition in terms of managers' confidence to deliver.

Fulfilling the digital potential

- 73% of managers want to see digital learning become more personal by using adaptive learning technologies – that is, where content is personalised and adapted according to personal learning style and progression.
- Managers also want digital learning to keep pace with the world of social media – especially the younger generation. 60% of younger managers want to see better networks become part of their learning, reflecting the fact that only 15% of managers see networks as a current benefit of digital development.
- There is also significant demand for digital learning to be more practical in its focus. 55% of managers want it to support 'doing' rather than learning, for example through apps that can help them to run a meeting or manage time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For organisations

How managers learn to lead has been transformed by the rise of digital, but maximising its potential demands a fundamental shift in how organisations approach management and leadership development.

Align development to strategy

– realising the potential of digital learning starts, like any successful management and leadership development, with aligning development to the organisation's strategic aims. Ensure senior management and work to achieve line manager buy-in. Monitor business needs as they develop and ensure that management development stays relevant as strategy evolves.

Define what managers need to succeed

– provide clear descriptions of the capabilities required of managers in different roles. Employees should be able to tick off their acquisition of skills, knowledge and experiences to meet the organisation's requirements and the requirements for their desired career path.

Recognise learning with professional accreditation

– use accredited digital learning that gives managers the chance to achieve formal professional qualifications. Blending the flexibility of digital learning with accredited development routes can give learners a clear focus and, by providing recognition of what they have learned, reinforce their confidence and performance.

Enable and empower – employers should facilitate learning and development in the widest sense but pass control to the learner and their line manager. Enable, guide and support learners, providing clarity about requirements and expectations so that learning remains aligned to organisational needs, but being flexible about delivery.

Select and signpost appropriate resources

– the internet offers endless resources, but quality is paramount. Give leaders and managers easy access to curated, approved tools, processes and knowledge sources.

Engage employees – actively encourage employees to use what's available. Build in ongoing 'marketing' of what's on offer, showing how resources can be used in practice to keep them at the forefront of employees' minds.

Support social – set up and facilitate social networks and forums for leaders/managers, whether internal and external to the organisation such as sector-based and professional networks.

Measure impact and build on your successes – measure learning through outcomes including accredited online learning, qualifications gained, and improvements in capability and experience, rather than inputs like time on courses or training spend. Assess learning and development in the organisation regularly to identify trends and usage of the tools you've provided and how managers and leaders feel they are developing. Explore the use of sentiment analysis (e.g. www.theysay.io) to help assess the impact of learning. Over time, build on your approach to develop a true learning culture that continues to support the organisation's strategic aims.

For individuals

The rapid evolution of digital technology is set to continually shape and reshape how managers learn their profession. A proactive approach to your own development is essential.

Take control – ultimately, you need to drive your own learning and development. It is your capability at stake and your career. Be active in assessing what you need for your success, the styles of learning that work for you, and finding ways to learn and develop.

Engage your line manager and L&D colleagues – they have the expertise, facilities and tools (and perhaps the budget) that you will need for your development at work. Show how your proposed development supports

business strategy, not just personal goals, to win support.

Seek quality – to identify the best learning resources, consider whether the development opportunity is credible, accredited and whether it suits your learning style. Will learning be purely self-directed, or will it provide the structure you need, for example through defined modules or e-learning journeys?

Prepare for the moment of need

– arm yourself with resources that can provide quick access to practical guidance at the point you need it.

- Seek curated, credible guides. ManagementDirect provides easy access to highly practical knowledge and guidance, carefully selected by CMI itself.
- For fast point-of-need help in dealing with specific tasks and new situations, leadership apps may help. These are changing all the time – again, look for those recommended by your organisation or a credible authority.
- For the development of deeper, more complex social skills and attitudes, develop your social networks using tools such as LinkedIn to build a network of trusted advisors. Be prepared to contribute as much as you learn.

Actively seek and experience new challenges – network with new groups and new people, both online and face to face, to expose yourself to new perspectives and fresh ideas.

Track your progress – monitor your progress and identify any gaps in your learning by recording your activity. This can also be the basis for demonstrating your commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) to your current or potential employers or accrediting bodies – showing just how much you've developed. CMI's online CPD system or other processes can help you define your learning objectives and track progress.

To read the full report go to www.managers.org.uk/digitalllearning or join the conversation at [#MgtDigitalLearning](https://twitter.com/MgtDigitalLearning).

To find out more about CMI's comprehensive digital learning portal, ManagementDirect, go to www.managers.org.uk/managementdirect and sign up for a free 7-day trial.