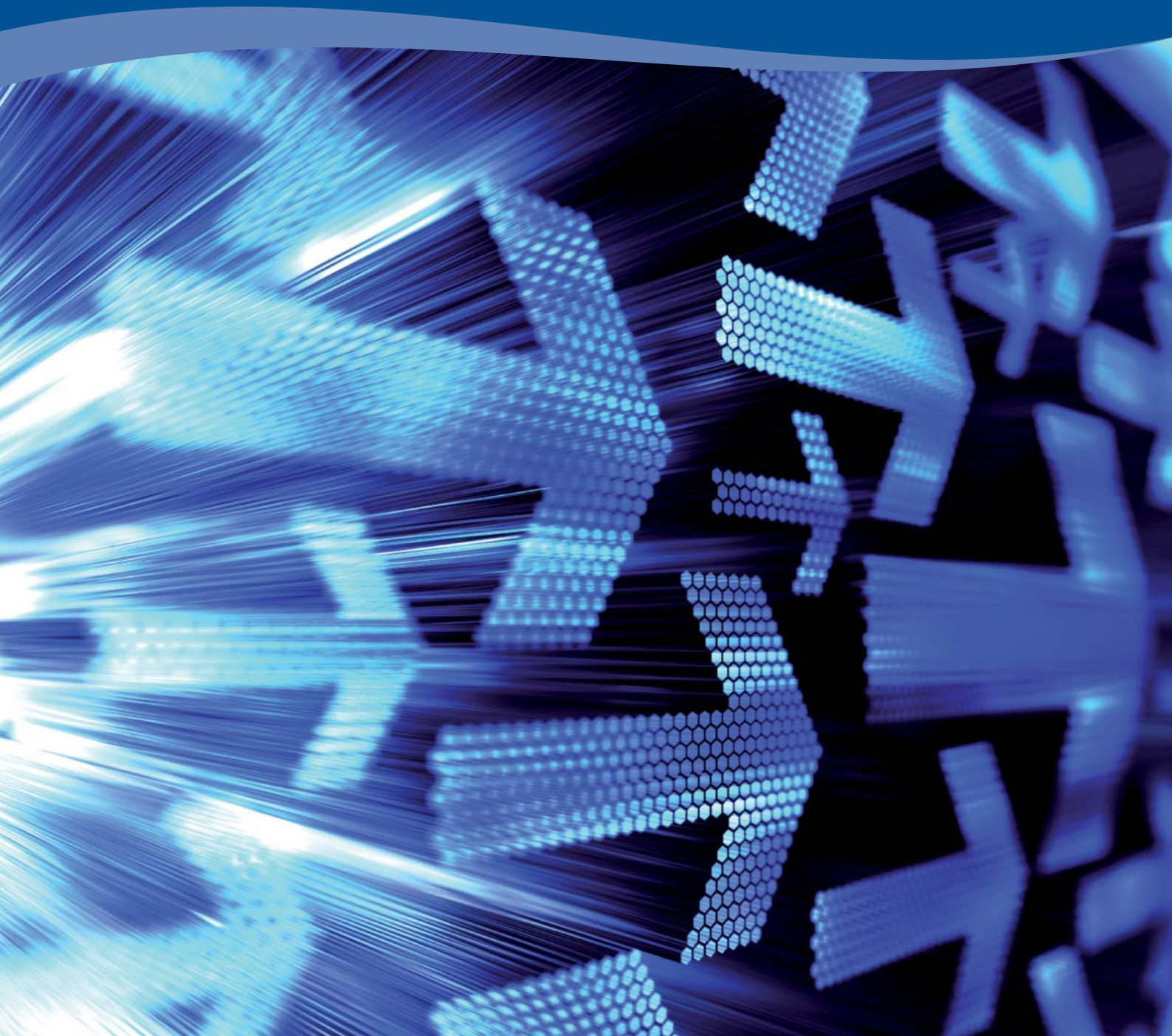


Survey report

Corporate Learning priorities survey 2010



Introduction

To drive into Henley Business School you must cross a cattle grid. The cattle are there in all weathers and they have a simple strategy for handling bad conditions – they stick together, they sit down, they study the landscape. Throughout 2009 I have met Managing Directors, CEO's, HR Directors and Learning & Development professionals who tell me they have adopted a similar pragmatic, level-headed, measured approach when faced with the tumultuous economic climate we have endured. Rather than axing development budgets they have sought more impactful interventions closely aligned to business objectives and rather than cutting leadership development they have focused effort on those individuals who they expect will lead their organisations into a future yet to be created. Softer skills; in leadership styles and in coaching for instance, that bring out the very best in people and facilitate team working have also been a priority.

In this survey, we asked around 2,500 clients and contacts for their perspective on the learning and development landscape in 2010 – what will be their priorities and how will they want that learning to be achieved? We hope the findings will be useful as a benchmark for your own planning for the year ahead.

Linda Irwin

Executive Director, Corporate Development

Executive Summary

The objective of this survey, conducted by the Corporate Development team at Henley Business School, was to discover the issues that will be the focus of attention for senior HR and L & D professionals in 2010 and to determine what really matters to them about the Business School they may choose to partner with and the programmes it provides. The survey generated nearly 120 responses, over 60% of which were from HR Directors, Vice Presidents or Heads of HR or Learning & Development in some of the UK's largest employers. One comment seemed to sum up the perception of 2010 as one when the priority will be:

'For all levels, including senior management, adjusting and revising many very fundamental values and ways of working.'

The key findings are:

Significant change has happened – now how do we make the best of it?

In their choice of people development concerns for 2010 HR professionals suggest they feel the majority of major change, provoked by the wider economic conditions, has happened and they anticipate turning their attention to succession planning and attracting new talent into the business. However, they do see a huge need to ensure managers have the skills to manage the aftermath of that change (67% mentioning this as a priority).

Leaders at all levels

Perhaps reflecting that new times need a new type of leader to navigate them, respondents indicated a significant focus on leadership development in 2010 – particularly at middle management level. They also anticipate focusing on high-potentials as they grow and develop to move their businesses into an uncertain future.

The shock of the new

Creativity, innovation, sustainability and strategic customer management all make a showing – albeit modest – in HR leaders priority listings for 2010. Though the results indicate some reticence about these subject areas – placing them lower down their 'Top 5' ranking – they are nevertheless featured in the mainstream management development agenda. Is this an acceptance that new approaches are needed to both old and new problems?

Lip service to coaching and sustainability?

While 61% said developing a coaching culture was one of their top 5 priorities only 9% made it their number 1 priority. Could this reflect an uncertainty about how to go about it or a concern as to whether the senior team will support the initiative?

On sustainability 53% stated this as an L & D priority but 68% ranked it only 3 – 5 in their top 5 priorities – it's on the agenda – but not top of it as yet.

No substitute for reputation and experience

HR leaders want to partner with a business school with a great reputation that will provide experiential, learning opportunities – backed up by recent, relevant research and case studies. 'Star' Faculty are of less concern than substantial content – whether from Faculty, guest speakers or external partners.

The shorter the better

The vast majority of respondents indicated that in this time-pressed world of work 2-3 day interventions are optimal but that there is still space for longer programmes where the content demands it.

'The priority for 2010 will be, for all levels, including senior management, adjusting and revising many very fundamental values and ways of working.'

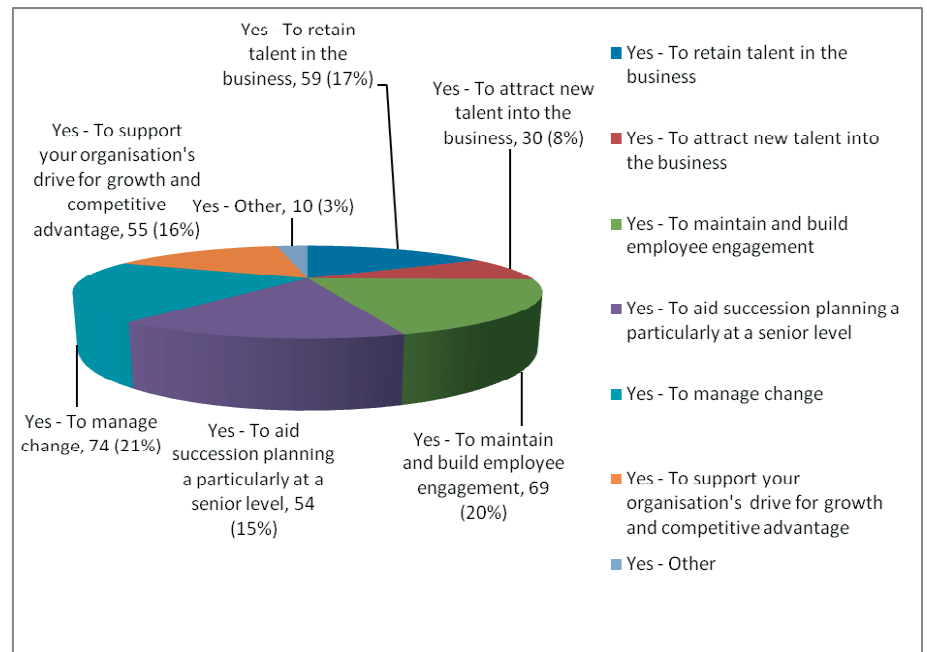
Detailed responses

‘Change even higher on the agenda in 2010.’

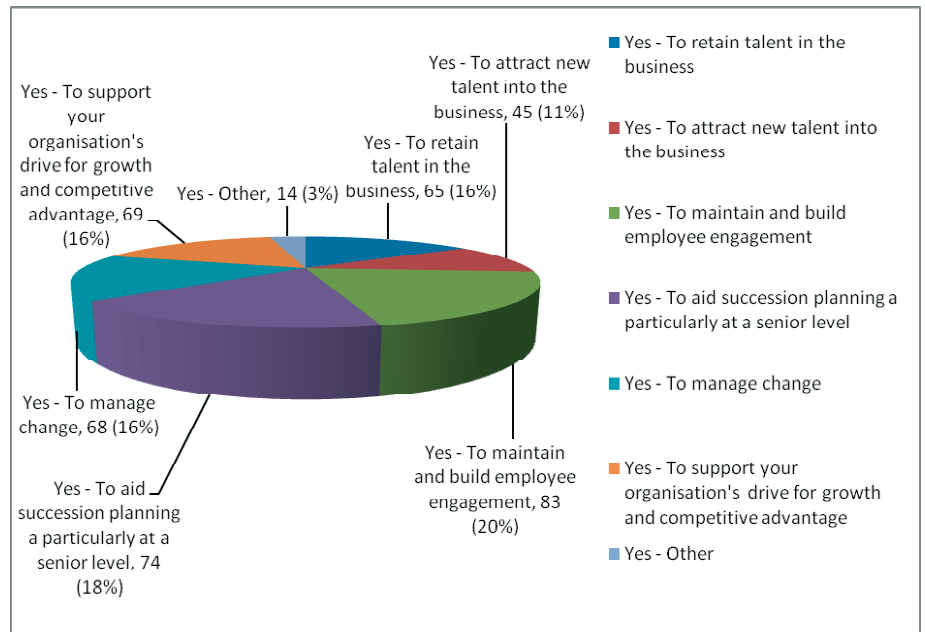
Q1. What were your people development concerns in 2009 and what will they be in 2010?

By and large concerns for 2010 are predicted to be very similar to those in 2009. The most significant difference is that respondents indicate there will be a renewed focus on attracting new talent into the business with 11% indicating this as a concern for 2010 compared with only 8% in 2009. This is in line with the overall market perception of the ‘green shoots’ of recovery possibly alleviating pressure on the jobs market. Respondents also foresee an increased focus on succession planning – particularly at a senior level with 18% naming it as a concern for 2010 vs 15% in 2009. The other interesting implication is that respondents no longer see managing change as a concern – 16% in 2010 vs 21% in 2009. This is inconsistent with the 67% of respondents that chose ‘Managing Change’ as a specific development priority in question 2 although one respondent commented, ‘Change even higher on the agenda in 2010.’ This inconsistency may perhaps suggest that respondents themselves – chiefly senior HR & L & D professionals – no longer see this as their concern, responsibility for managing the aftermath of change and upheaval in 2009 may now have passed to line management – who need to be equipped to deal with it.

2009



2010



In their comments many respondents made reference to specific priorities related to the turmoil of 2009:

'Re-engage workforce following major redundancy programme.'

'Adapt to new (tougher) market conditions.'

'To ride out the storm that has been created by the recession without losing our A teams.'

'To reduce the level of uncertainty among employees.'

Others describe alternative key concerns:

'Increase teamwork and co-operation between departments.'

'To focus not only on the High potentials, but in addition on the High performers, too.'

'I think that a big issue is also developing leadership capability amongst staff.'

And for some 2010 will be a transformative year:

'For all levels, including senior management, adjusting and revising many very fundamental values and ways of working.'

Q2. Which of the following are specific learning and development priorities for your organisation for 2010?

Leadership development – of both the senior and middle management teams, was by far the most important priority for all respondents with 80% (senior leaders) and 79% (middle management) nominating it as one of their top 5 priorities. Interestingly, leadership development for middle management seems to have the edge with 67% of those naming it as priority rating it as 1 or 2 on their list compared to just 35% of those rating leadership development for senior managers at all, citing it as their priority 1 or 2. This may reflect a need in 2010 to focus on developing the next generation of managers – proactive succession planning. This supposition is perhaps backed up by the fact that 72% of respondents also chose ‘Developing high potentials’ as one of their priorities for next year with 59% of those making it priority 1 or 2 – although a ‘high potential’ may not yet be a leader.

Some respondents listed the **development of specialist skills in managers** as part of their top 5 priorities with a massive 67% of the total respondents choosing ‘Managing change (including the aftermath of M & A activities)’ as a priority – with 73% of those making it number 1 or 2. There is also perhaps a ‘back to basics’ mentality with 61% of respondents listing ‘management’ skills as a priority with 64% of those making it number 1 or 2. Sticking with the focus on basics, ‘Finance for managers’ also came in as a priority for 49% of respondents, but only 32% of those made it 1st or 2nd on their lists. 53% of respondents have made managers understanding of sustainability a priority but interestingly 68% of those make it number 3 – 5 on their list – does this reflect a perception that sustainability must be addressed, but that it is not top of the management skills agenda at the moment?

The **customer-facing skills of marketing and customer management and the more ‘blue sky thinking’ skills of creativity and innovation** make a respectable showing in the priority listings – though with a slightly lower score:

	% of total respondents	% of those Citing priority 1 or 2
Developing specialist marketing skills in managers	37%	27%
Developing innovation & creativity capability	44%	45%
Skills to develop customer management/relationship strategy	57%	42%

Whilst it is refreshing to see these appearing as important, their slightly lower scores may reflect the composition of our sample – being chiefly HR and L & D professionals - and a recognition that development in these

areas may be managed by the functional areas involved. It does indicate though that the commercial imperatives to work innovatively, think creatively and focus intently on developing a close, two-way relationship with clients and customers at every level are being reflected in the mainstream people development agenda.

Coaching featured in the top 5 for many respondents – 53% of respondents citing ‘Developing coaching skills of leaders’ and 61% citing ‘Skills for developing a coaching culture’ as priorities although interestingly only 9% of those made this their 1st or 2nd priority (25% making ‘developing coaching skills of leaders’ number 1 or 2). Is this because many recognize the long term value of coaching – making it one of their priorities – but, for many possible reasons, not yet committing to it as ‘the’ way of doing business.

It is interesting to see that ‘**developing the capability of the HR team**’ featured in the top 5 priorities for 36% of the total respondents, although only 34% of those made it their number 1 or 2 priority. This may be a reflection of the need to develop HR’s commercial acumen to support business performance and/or the need to provide functional HR training – a question we did not examine. Facilitation, though lowest overall in respondents list of priorities did still feature for some – 23% - 32% of those making it their number 1 or 2 priority

Q3. How important are the following criteria when choosing a Business School for an open or custom development programme?

The respondents to this question made clear their top three requirements of a business school partner for their learning and development are:

- **reputation** (76% saying this is extremely important)
- use of **up to date case studies** (65%)
- **experiential learning and a focus on soft skills** (57%).

Whilst not of paramount importance, 71% cited the **environment** where the training will take place as quite important to them when deciding. Interestingly ‘star’ or **well known Faculty** is of lesser importance – only 22% said this was extremely important and although 59% listed it as quite important 23% said it was ‘not very’.

Inclusion of **recent, original research** is identified by a total of 86% as extremely or quite important – not surprising as this is one of the key factors differentiating business school provision of L & D solutions from other providers. Many respondents demonstrated their requirement that business schools stay close to their markets by **partnering where appropriate with external experts** and guest speakers with a total of 88% saying this was extremely or quite important to them.

	Extremely	Quite	Not very	Irrelevant
Reputation of training provider/rankings	76	33	2	0
Environment where training will take place	18	71	16	2
Inclusion of recent, original research	33	53	16	3
Delivery by well known Faculty	22	59	23	1
Use of up to date case studies to embed learning	65	35	3	0
Use of experiential learning/focus on soft skills	57	41	10	1
Global experience/expertise of provider	47	41	13	4
Incorporation of guest speakers/partnership with industry experts.	37	51	17	3

Q4. Is duration an important consideration for you when booking or recommending a programme?

With little time to spare away from the office respondents gave a clear indication that **2 - 3 day programmes are optimal** (53%) with another 18% stating that ‘the shorter the better’. However, 27% stated that a programme’ should be as long as the learning objectives require’ - revealing scope for longer interventions where a case for them can be made.

Methodology

The survey was conducted online in November 2009 amongst around 2,500 corporate client and non-client contacts of Henley Business School. These were a mixture of HR and non-HR senior managers from private and public sector organisations employing in excess of 500 people. There is a bias towards HR & L & D professionals. There were a mix of Alumni and non-Alumni of Henley Business School in the sample. A total of 119 responses were received of which 60% were from Directors, VP’s or Heads of HR or Learning & Development, 32% were HR Managers/Officers and 7% were non-HR Directors. 14% of the respondents were non-UK - primarily from other European countries with one or two from the rest of the world.


Client Directors and members of Faculty would be happy to discuss the implications of the research for your organisation in more detail. If you would like arrange a discussion on this or on the new Henley portfolio of open programmes or our custom learning and development work please contact Gemma Kay on exec@henley.com in the first instance, or telephone her on 01491 418767.

Henley works with organisations worldwide providing open and custom programmes and through a number of communities of excellence focussing on reputation, HR, innovation, sustainable enterprise, knowledge management and customer management. The Henley Partnership also offers a unique platform for organisations to benefit from Henley’s research and Faculty expertise.

Contact

For details of our custom corporate development work, including case studies or for your personal copy of our new portfolio of Open Executive Education programmes please telephone **+44 (0)1491 418767** or email exec@henley.com

Survey Report

 For more information, please contact:

Executive Education

Henley Business School
Greenlands
Henley-on-Thames
Oxfordshire, RG9 3AU
exec@henley.com
Tel +44 (0)1491 418 767
www.henley.com

