



2021 LEARNING TRENDS REPORT: THE PATH FORWARD



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WELCOME

2020 was an unprecedented year and placed us in uncharted territory...

It pushed us forward, accelerated change, and at times, took us to the brink of what we can handle personally and professionally. The culmination of such a year has brought many industries into uncharted territory, and the Learning and Performance space is no different.

As we look ahead and consider what's next, several questions loom large, including: What does the pivot from surviving to thriving look like? Now that we're adept at the "new normal," will we ever return to the old? What beneficial elements of the past year do we want to install for good? As we approach the moment of re-emergence and re-entry, what decisions will we make?

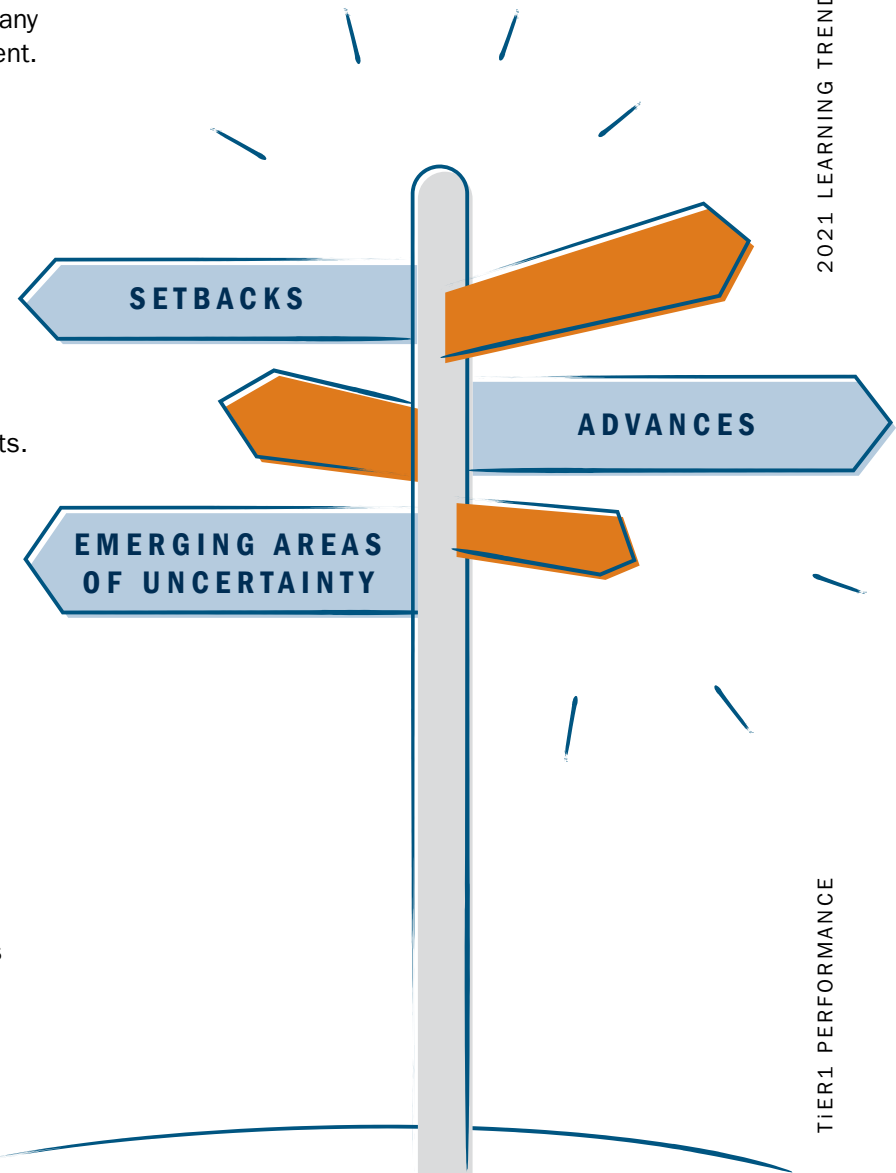
This report is a summary of our collective experiences as Learning and Performance professionals. With our 2021 Learning Trends Survey, we asked the industry about their design and development processes and methodologies; about the trends that excite them and the outcomes they need; and about the challenges they're facing and the successes they've found—and our respondents provided rich and meaningful insights.

We've supplemented the survey findings with observations from working with our clients as well as relevant research and thinking from others. In the following pages, you'll find insights related to our experiences in 2020 grouped into the following categories:

- 1. Setbacks** – The ways the past year slowed momentum in areas that had previously been building.
- 2. Advances** – The ways we were propelled forward through necessity in meaningful and powerful ways.
- 3. Emerging Areas of Uncertainty** – The turning points we face and the intentional decisions we'll need to make moving forward.

We hope you'll find this information validating, illuminating, and motivating. As much as navigating 2020 was a shared experience, so too will be how we collectively choose to respond during 2021. You are a meaningful voice and contributor alongside us in this space, and we invite you to share your thoughts, questions, and suggestions for us all to absorb and leverage.

**TO THE JOURNEY AHEAD!
-THE TIER1 TEAM**



SETBACKS

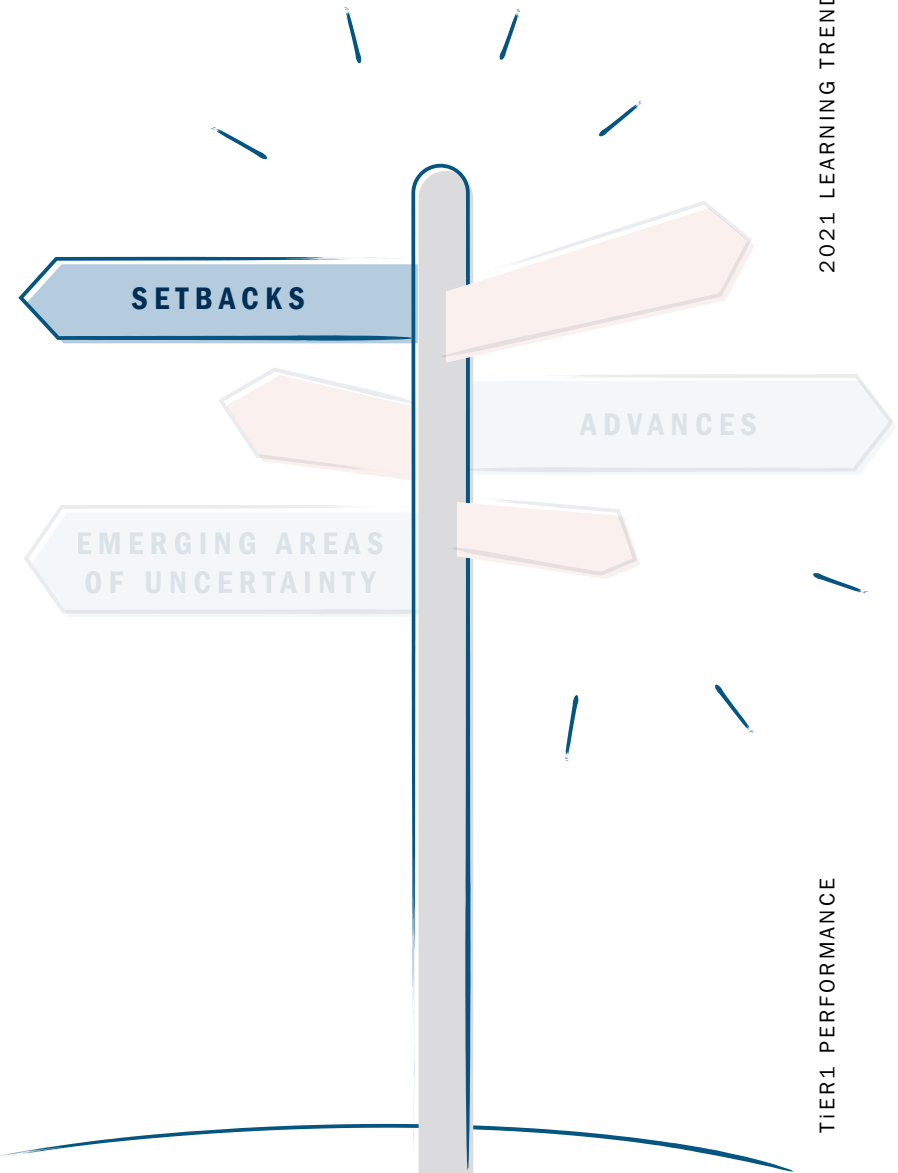
*“What is defeat? Nothing but education –
nothing but the first step to something better.”*

– Wendell Phillips

We'd be foolish to think that a year as tumultuous as 2020 wouldn't have set us back in some ways. The rapid changes in direction, collaboration, and ways of working stopped some of our established activities and exposed flaws that were previously hidden by the speed of business and our own momentum. Rather than resign ourselves to viewing these changes as losses, we instead see them as opportunities to thoughtfully reevaluate our approaches as learning professionals—to ask ourselves what we're about to launch into and where we're aiming to go.

INSIGHTS

- 1. We're unsure how to bring our best design and development practices into the virtual/remote space.**
- 2. Knowledge transfer is harder when meeting face-to-face is impractical.**
- 3. Motivation and engagement are at an all-time low, so training efficiency needs to be at an all-time high.**

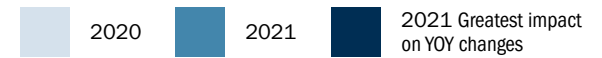


INSIGHT #1:

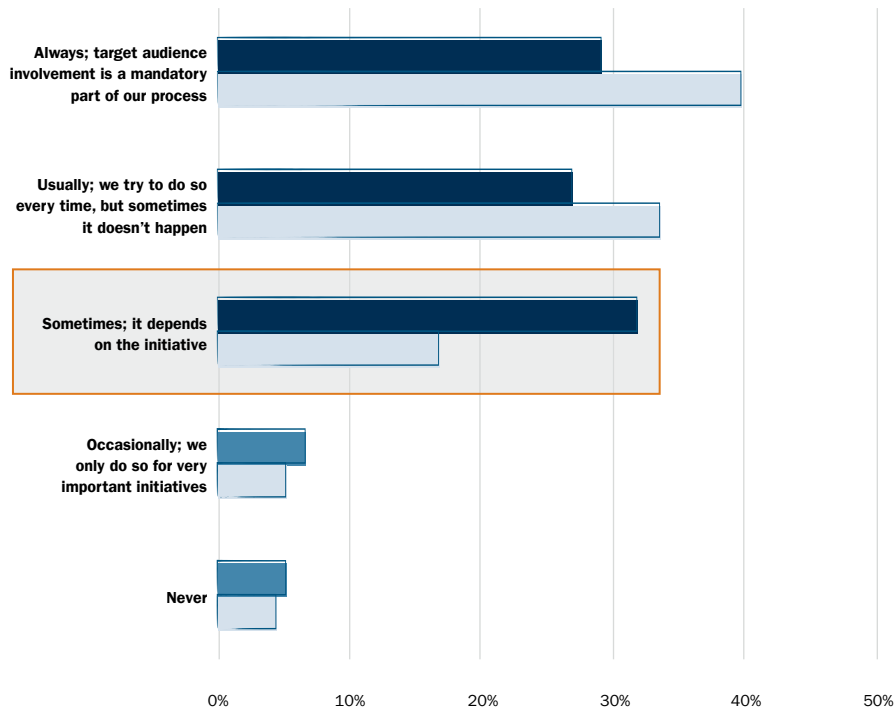
WE'RE UNSURE HOW TO BRING OUR BEST DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES INTO THE VIRTUAL/REMOTE SPACE.

Workers across the board endured a seismic shift last year—many of us went home, stayed home, and worked from home for the majority of the year. While the industry you're working in may have leveraged different employee/frontline policies for remote working, many HR, training, learning, and performance professionals found themselves at home.

Of course, this disrupted our usual practices for design and development.

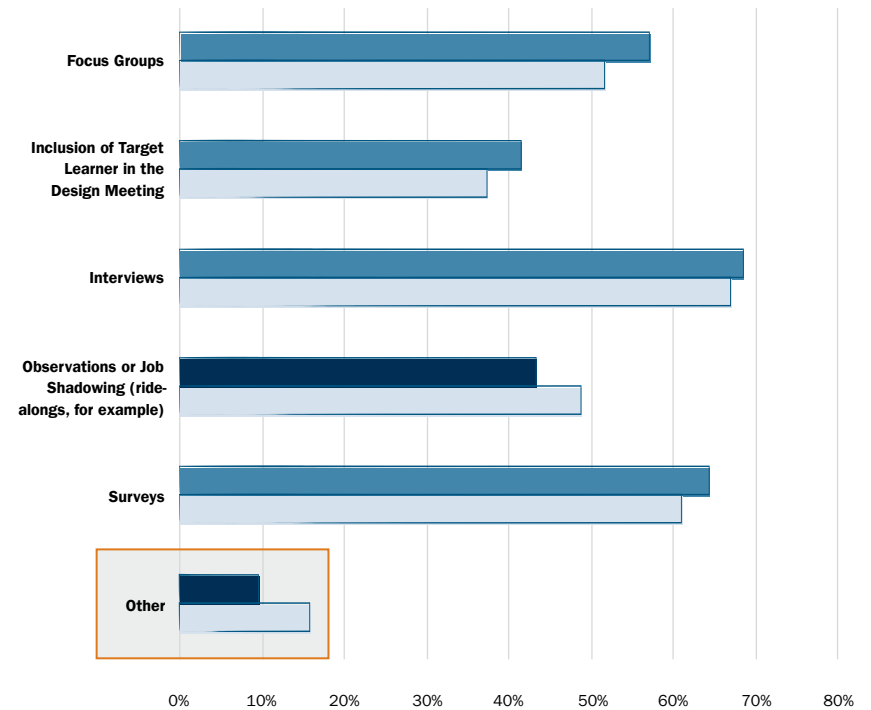


Q1: HOW OFTEN DO YOU INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN YOUR DESIGN PROCESS?



Q2: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHOD(S) DO YOU USE TO INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN THE TRAINING DESIGN PROCESS?

Select all that apply.



In the graphs above and those that follow, we indicate changes in year-over-year responses.

Whenever there was a significant change between the 2020 and 2021 responses, we indicate those factors that had the greatest impact on year-over-year change in dark blue. Where appropriate, we also highlight the single factor that had the greatest impact on the year-over-year change.

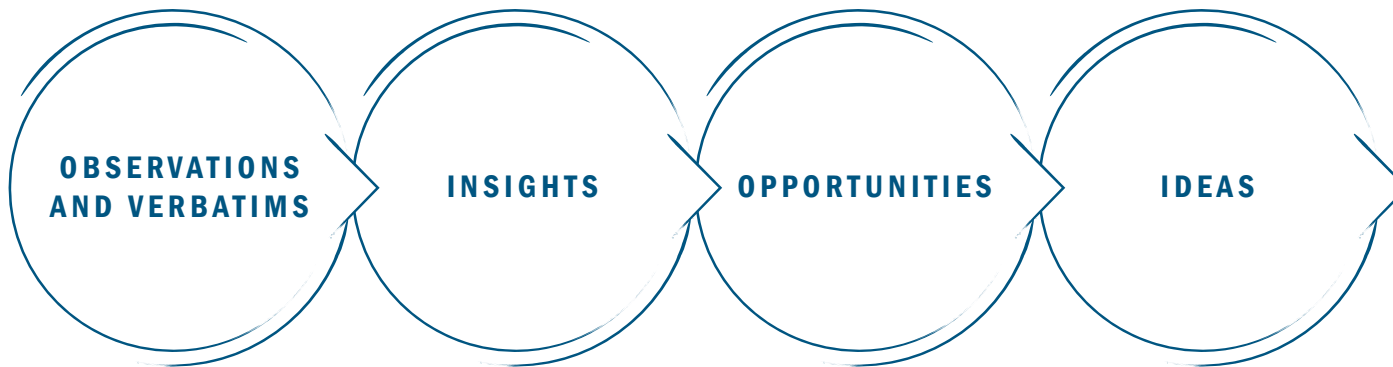
Disruption to Design

When reflecting on how often our end user is included in design, we saw a large shift in 2020 with a reduction in responses like “always” and “usually” and an increase in “sometimes.”

We also saw a big change in some of the design methods used. Observations were down, and “meetings” (focus groups, design meetings, and interviews) took their place.

This makes sense. During the pandemic, it was probably difficult at best and against policy at worst to do things like observe, job shadow, or embed to watch and listen to our audiences. However, there are some implications for us as professionals.

As we have incorporated improved design practices the past few decades, one of the biggest improvements includes our focus on **end user empathy**. Design Thinking and User-Centered Design have guided our understanding of the end user’s “jobs, pains, and gains,” “needs,” “jobs-to-be-done,” etc. – all practices that ensure we know who we’re designing for and why. In this way, we had been breaking old habits (jumping straight to ideas and solutions) and working our way left (conducting objective observations). But in 2020, we had to pivot.



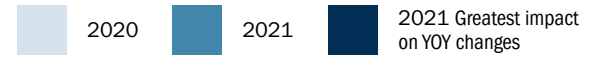
Focus groups, interviews, and surveys are great—but they are user-reported data, and as such, aren’t always 100% accurate or without bias. As we continue to work in a remote (or at the very least, hybrid) world, **we must modify our techniques** so we may observe our audience in the flow of work, ensuring we can gather objective data before we begin forming insights, opportunities, and ideas.

Disruption to Development

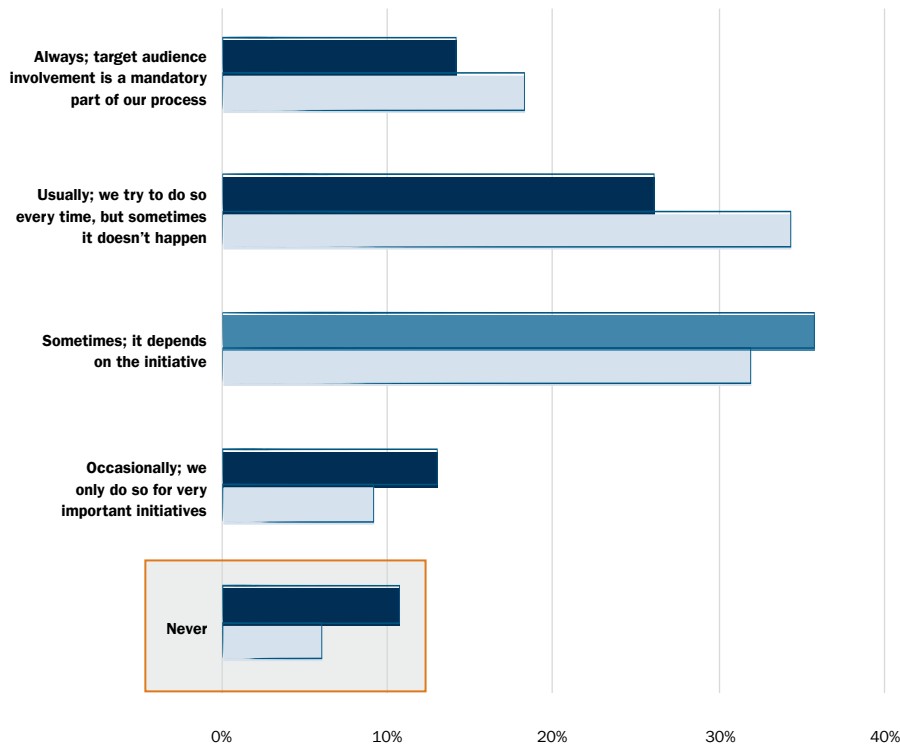
Similarly, there was an impact to development processes. This past year, we saw a lot more responses of “never” (and less likely to “always” or “usually”) in regard to how often you include your audience in the development process. When they were included, they were more likely to be reviewing drafts or participating in usability tests/pilots.

The pivot to remote work also shifted how we collaborate with individuals in the midst of our processes. This past year, we were less collaborative, and reverted to more review-related activities. While valuable activities for our audience, relying solely on these tactics can leave us missing some key inputs, too. As we deepen our design/development practices and work in more agile ways with the business, we’ll need to **focus on iterative development** in cycles we can take from lean startup, PDSA (plan-do-study-act), or test and learn practices. For that to become a reality, we’ll need to **find new ways to involve our end users earlier** in development, prior to the waterfall “review” phases many learning organizations have grown up with, and certainly before piloting (which usually represents the penultimate step before finalizing assets).

The question for our collective consideration—how might we best do this in a virtual world?

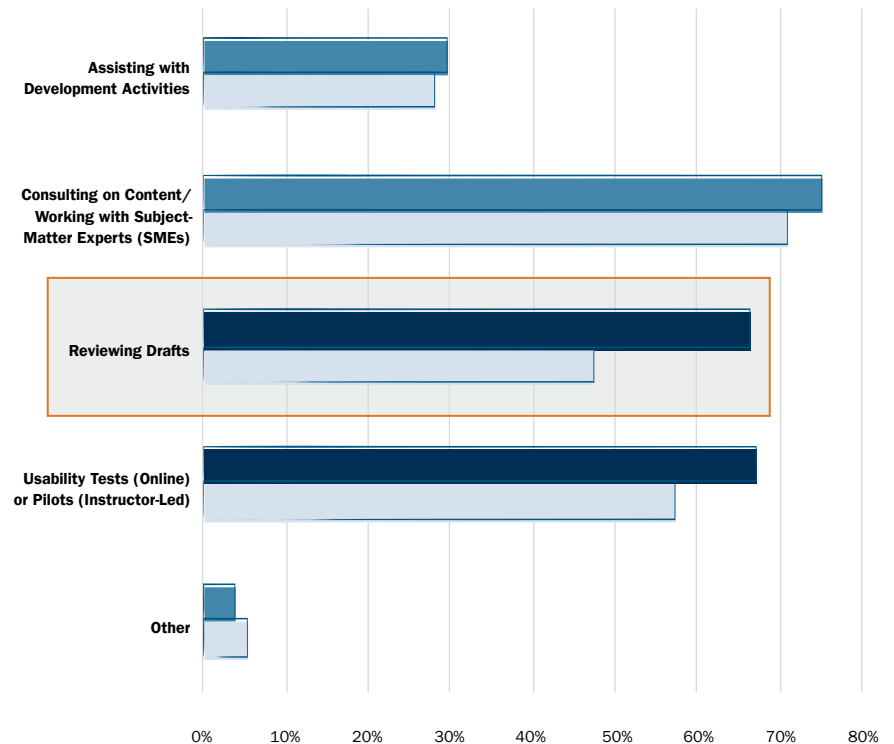


Q3: HOW OFTEN DO YOU INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?



Q4: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PROCESS(ES) DO YOU USE TO INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AS PART OF THE TRAINING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

Select all that apply.



INSIGHT #2:

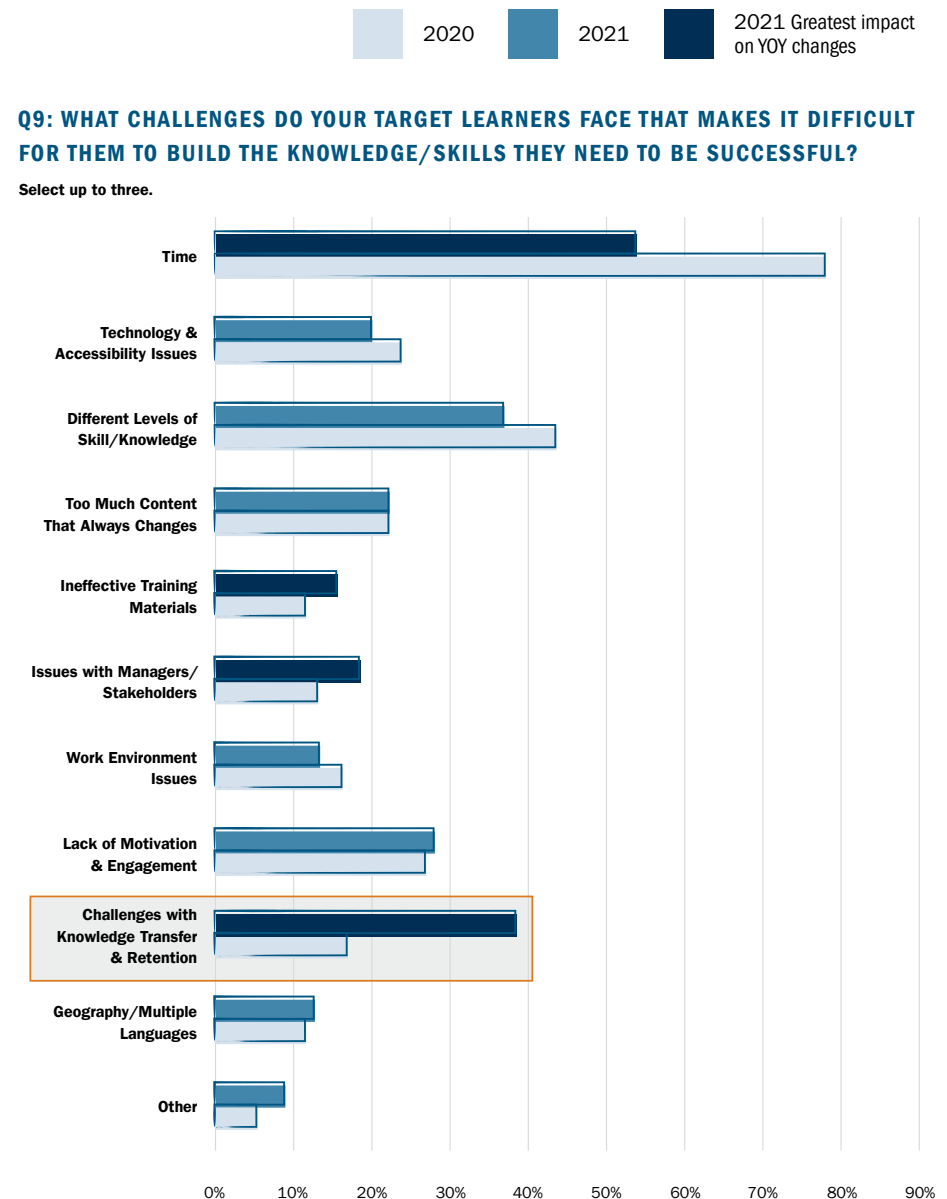
KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IS HARDER WHEN MEETING FACE-TO-FACE IS IMPRACTICAL.

The survey data has revealed another area worthy of strategizing on how to proceed: **the ways we build proficiency**. Compared with the previous year, “challenges with knowledge transfer and retention” more than doubled for end users, as did “ineffective training materials” as a challenge for respondents (questions 9 and 10).

It’s TIER1’s belief that as learning and performance professionals, we have the opportunity to support our audience in two key types of moments: *prior to the work/performance context and in the work/performance context*. As an example, traditional training happens “prior to” an individual getting to the work/performance context. It’s meant to prepare them with new information or skills. A job aid or performance support tool is meant for use “in context,” as the work or performance happens.

As an industry, part of the journey we’re on is to create more experiences for our audience in the work/performance context—both supporting remembering during those moments, and actually changing the work/performance context to drive the behaviors we seek (like when industrial psychologists place healthy snacks at eye level, and junk food down by the floor in a cafeteria setting). However, the data makes it clear that this past year, some of the things we take for granted (like an individual being able to walk over to their neighbor and ask a question) were lost. And without them, retention, long-term knowledge transfer, and general performance diminished a little.

As we move forward, we’ll have to ask ourselves how we might both focus on building in interventions for remembering AND changing the work/performance context itself. Deloitte is calling this shift to work context and continuous learning “**Superlearning**.” TIER1 has been addressing this shift with an evolution to how we’ve traditionally worked in L&D called **Performance Experience Design**. While the language isn’t set yet, the need for us to shift our focus as professionals is clear.



INSIGHT #3:

MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT IS AT AN ALL-TIME LOW, SO TRAINING EFFICIENCY NEEDS TO BE AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH.

The last of our setbacks pertains to motivation and engagement. Survey respondents identified “motivation & engagement” as a common challenge. In looking at the data year-over-year, we see that this challenge more than doubled in frequency.

Common sense helps us process this result as employees quickly shifted their usual routines and rituals. Many transitioned to a virtual space; parents became part-time teachers; a scarcity mindset prevailed for basic household staples; and we all faced uncertainty in many areas of our lives.

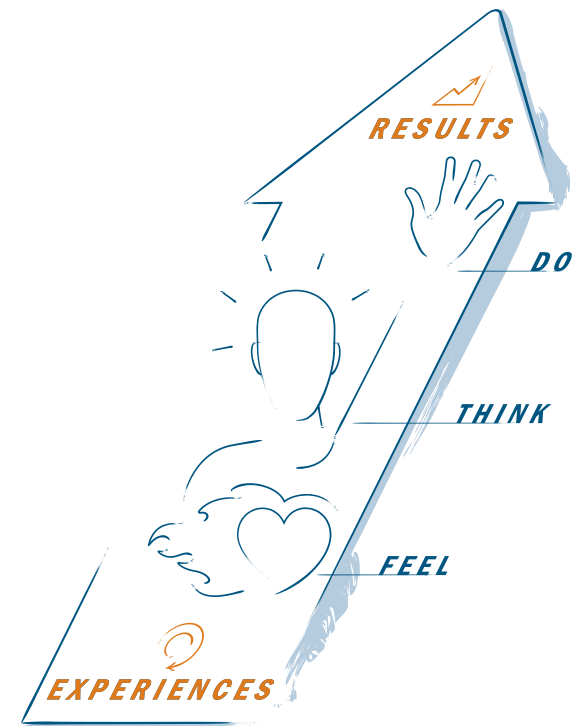
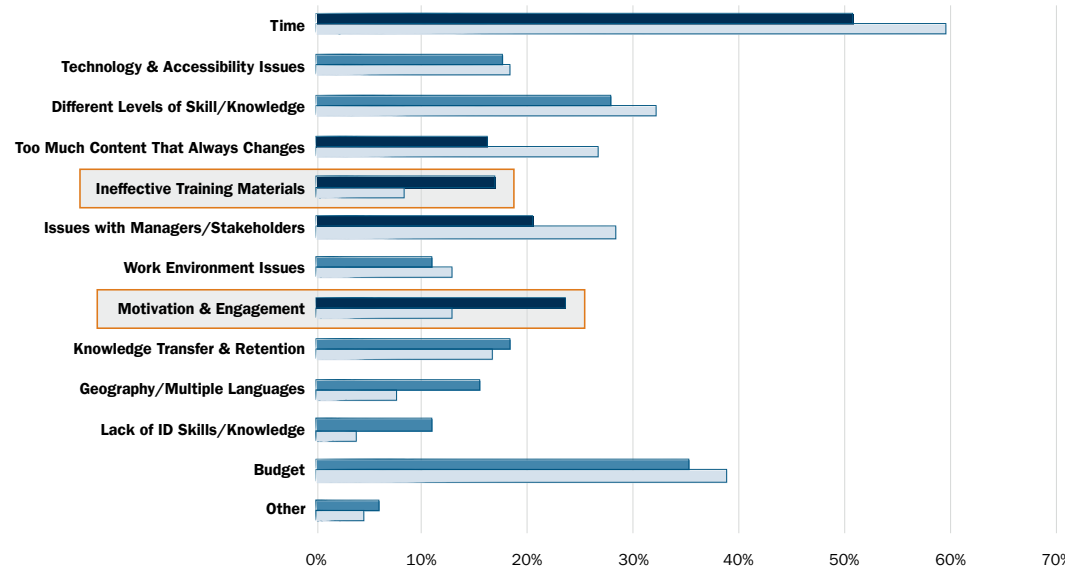
When that’s the backdrop to your workday, it’s understandable that finding the mental space for a poorly crafted, compliance-driven course would be unpalatable. But we’re at a crossroads: We’re simultaneously seeing a dip in motivation and engagement, but a surge in trends like continuous learning and learning experience platforms. How are we meant to reconcile the two?

We believe the answer is in intentional design for our audience. Intentional design allows us to craft not training assets, but experiences that change feelings and mindsets in a way that shifts behaviors and performance outcomes. With time, attention, and mind space more precious than ever, our interventions need to be more meaningful than ever.



Q10: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE WHEN YOU TRY TO HELP THESE LEARNERS BUILD THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS?

Select up to three.



ADVANCES



Credit to Tom Fishburne (marketoonist.com)

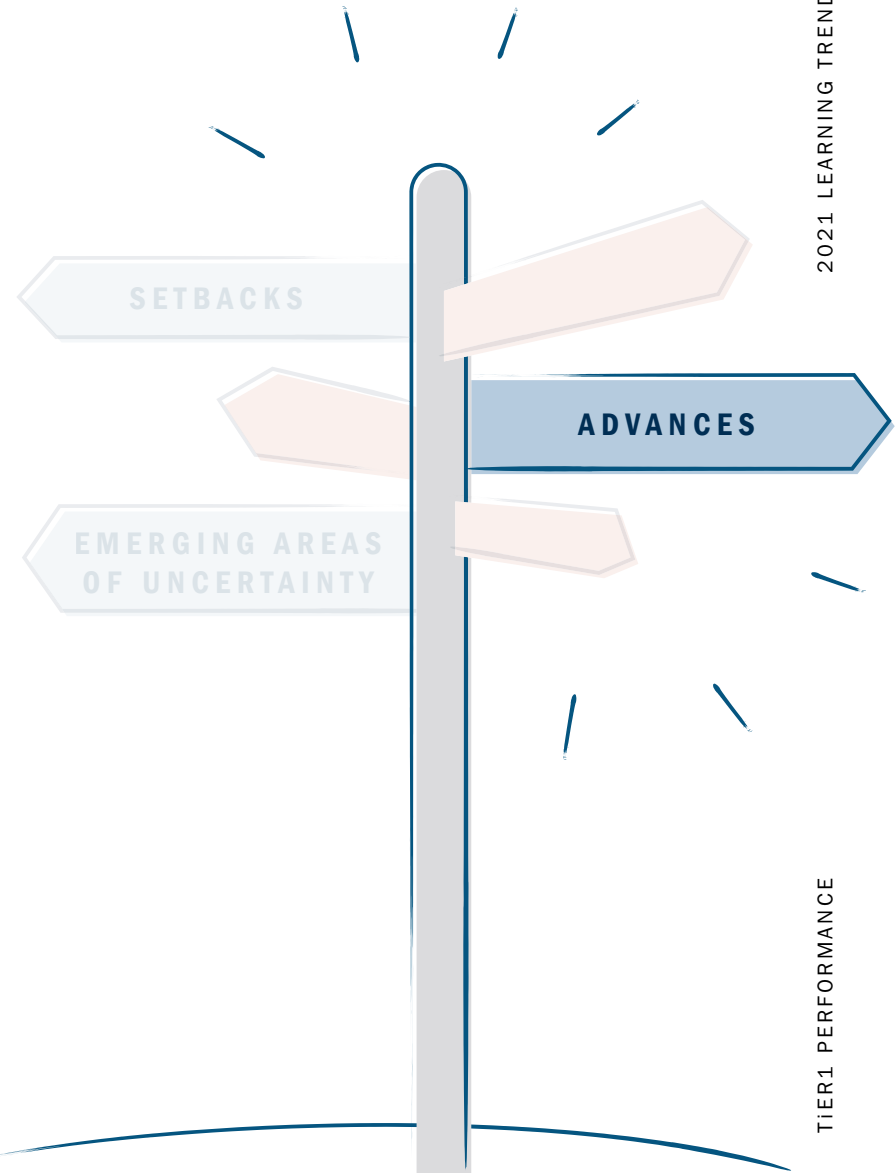
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We just looked at three ways 2020 impeded our progress as professionals. However, it also pushed us forward in major ways. A fun (and truthful) trend in memes/professional cartoons this past year was the commentary on how COVID-19 changed our landscape. Some of the cartoons showed how it wasn't the CEO, CTO, or anyone in the C-suite that led digital transformation for their companies, but rather COVID-19. Other cartoons looked back at the moment right before the pandemic with leaders making bold proclamations that transformation was "years away."

Hindsight really is 2020. The past year has given us the opportunity to reimagine, innovate, and collaborate like never before. And now, we have new foundations to build from. Let's explore what this means for learning and performance.

INSIGHTS

4. **Meaningful progress, connection, and platforms matter.**
5. **"Learning" continues to get smaller and smaller and "doing" continues to rise.**



INSIGHT #4:

MEANINGFUL PROGRESS, CONNECTION, AND PLATFORMS MATTER.

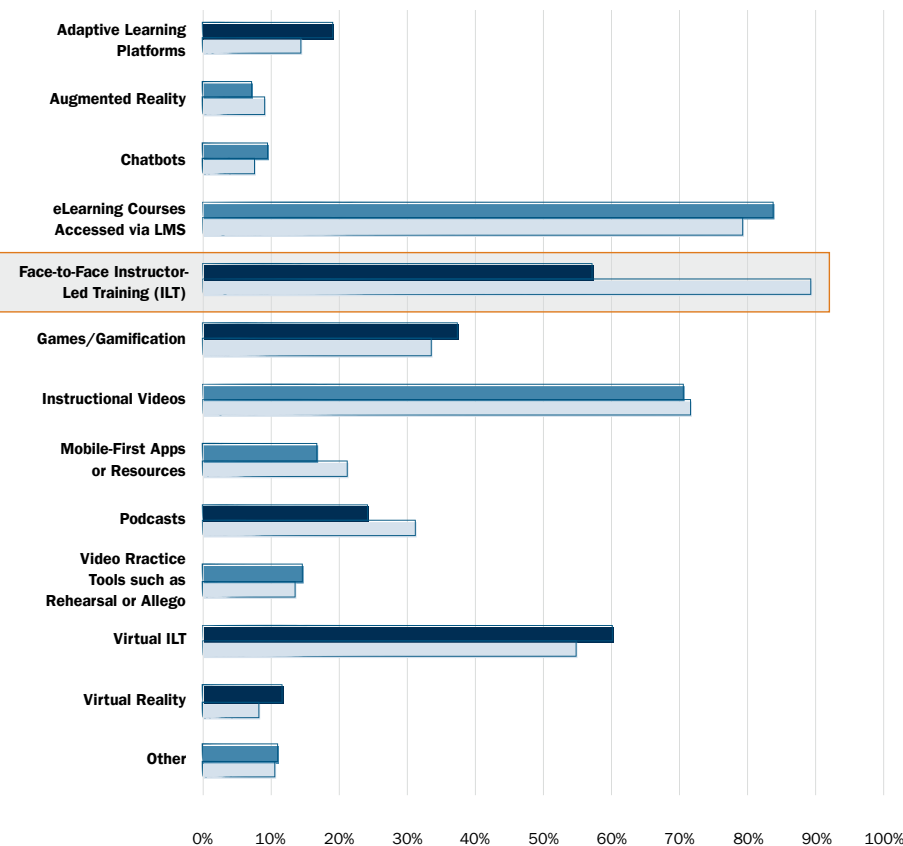
One big step forward (in the longer journey to continue to evolve) shows up in the way our work as learning professionals is changing – and how those changes are influenced by and are influencing the technology platforms we use.

This year, Gartner released their [L&D Innovation Bullseye](#) that indicated the ways we have embedded, are adopting, and are experimenting with new methods when building experiences. Methods like simulation, action learning, adaptive learning, partner orgs., and development networks are being adopted and experimented with through channels like social networks, Learning Experience Platforms, chatbots, and others.



Q5: WHAT METHOD(S) WILL YOU (OR YOUR ORGANIZATION) USE TO DELIVER TRAINING IN 2021?

Select all that apply.



In the survey data, we are seeing similar insights. When asked about the methods/modalities/technologies you want to use in the future, newer platforms like Articulate Rise, and methods like video, performance support, and microlearning were still hot. Interestingly, when digging into the trends, we saw statically significant increases in adaptive learning platforms, games/gamification, and all things virtual. What does this mean for us?

1. Our performers are hungry for ways to visualize and track progress.

We know that one big mindset shift as experience designers is considering how we might improve our methods of surfacing progress. Gamification comes to mind here, but there's a risk of oversimplification when it simply focuses on elements like leaderboards and badges. Thinking more broadly about game mechanics gives us the power to surface meaningful progress that is translatable to our work.

Whether through leaderboards, points, experience, levels, etc., game designers place emphasis on visualizing progress and providing feedback to the player. All of this contributes to creating a state of flow where difficulty and ability are in balance. As we go forward, we should continue to look for ways to do the same. How can we create feedback loops that inform our performers so they can be empowered in their own journeys of development? How can we make their growth and development visible? What do our technology platforms allow today, how might we customize them to go further, and what should we plan to implement tomorrow?

2. Connection is more meaningful than ever.

In reaction to the isolation of the last year and in response to what technology in our personal lives (e.g., social media) can do, we're hungry for more connection and more *meaningful* connection. This goes beyond just adding meetings to our calendars. It delves deeper to the human interactions that can serve as the root of establishing the relationships and trust that enable better work.

All trends point to wanting our work platforms to support this: The continued rise of Yammer and professional social networks, integrated chat (like in Microsoft Teams), discussion threads in your LMS, video upload and feedback, GIFs/emojis in our meetings (to convey emotion), or even connection/scheduling tools to create more human encounters.

The water cooler chat is less prevalent than it was prior to last year. "Accidental" connections are less likely. How do we continue to enable the organic exchange of shared knowledge that those moments once created? **When we design for solutions, we often think of individuals, but people actually work and thrive in teams.** So how might we design for things like conversation, influencers, or the rituals/routines of our work?

3. Platforms are going to play a huge role in shaping the broad future of employee experiences and our specific learning experiences.

Not long ago, the platforms that supported learning professionals were all just mechanisms to serve up SCORM files. From humble beginnings, this field has evolved rapidly and is being disrupted by new competitors with niche functionality. This, coupled with the rate of change, means getting locked into a long-term contract with a platform vendor has a disproportional effect on the impact of L&D teams. Now more than ever, it's critical to tie a learning technology strategy to your overall learning strategy and company strategy.

To help simplify, our point-of-view is that there are a few categories of capability to keep a specific eye on:

- a. The Learner Experience** – How your platform of choice offers an interface that individuals use for discovering, consuming, and finding recommended or related content. Your platform can enable or discourage adaptation, microlearning, or social collaboration in this way.
- b. Programmatic Features** – How your platform allows you to build, manage, and deliver related activities. Your platform may support or hinder authoring, development, meta tagging, or related skill building.
- c. Learning Management** – How your platform allows you to track and learn from the data of your performers. An evolving space, your platform may lead or lag in LMS approaches, data visualization, or analytics.

In the coming years, the race to define, disrupt, or merge the future of the LMS, talent management system, learning experience platform, integrated learning system, content delivery, and internal collaboration tools will hopefully yield a few clear winners. Until then, keeping those three lenses in mind may help.

THE ROLE OF LEARNING EXPERIENCE PLATFORMS

As major trends like digital transformation and globalization continue to reshape the working world, businesses are evolving quickly, and they need employees to change roles, change processes, and reskill more rapidly and fluidly than in the past. Traditional LMS platforms are more focused on prescription and compliance—which still meet important business needs. However, the reality for modern learners in dynamic workplaces is that they have less time for formal learning and need more access to critical knowledge and expertise at the point of need. In response, we’re seeing new classes of learning platforms that put **the learner** at the center of the learning experience (rather than the content). Keeping learners engaged in a daily learning process cultivates faster onboarding, deeper expertise, social collaboration, and real-time performance support to get answers in a quickly changing environment.

Modern learning platforms, often referred to as **Learning Experience Platforms (LXP)** and **Integrated Learning Systems (ILS)**, provide features and capabilities that keep employees across the enterprise engaged with content, programs, peers, and experts “in the flow of work.” This puts performance-focused learning and coaching into the platforms that employees need and use daily. They also harness powerful technologies, like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), to drive relevant and personalized learning based on individual profiles and criteria defined by the organization. These innovative platforms leverage digital marketing nudges and triggers, along with peer connections and communities, to keep learners engaged daily. They also readily integrate with other applications in the talent ecosystem. This enables organizations to create a culture of continuous learning that encourages employees to own and self-direct development, while also supporting defined talent management strategies. These new platforms include greatly expanded analytics capabilities, fueled by Experience API (xAPI), to facilitate more intensive business intelligence activities than are possible with a traditional LMS.

INSIGHT #5:

“LEARNING” CONTINUES TO GET SMALLER AND SMALLER AND “DOING” CONTINUES TO RISE.

Two major shifts here.

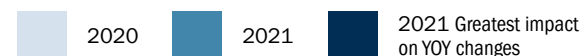
First, microlearning is dead. We're heading to nano, pico, and beyond! Yes, it made sense in the past to go from the 45–60-minute eLearning course and challenge ourselves to do it in 15 minutes. But in the world of 2021, where a 3-minute video might have us bored and skipping forward, the microlearning of old isn't micro enough.

Second, knowing doesn't equal doing. As professionals, we aren't simply interested in whether individuals know something, we're interested in how that changes their behaviors and how those behaviors drive results for our organizations. Knowing is often how it starts, but behavior change and performance is what matters (hence our shift to think of ourselves as Performance Experience Designers at TiER1).

Our survey data support this thinking. Behavioral nudges and habit-building both saw sharp increases coming into this year. As we take off our “instructional designer” hats and put on our “behavioral economics” and “psychologist” hats, we can see more clearly why.

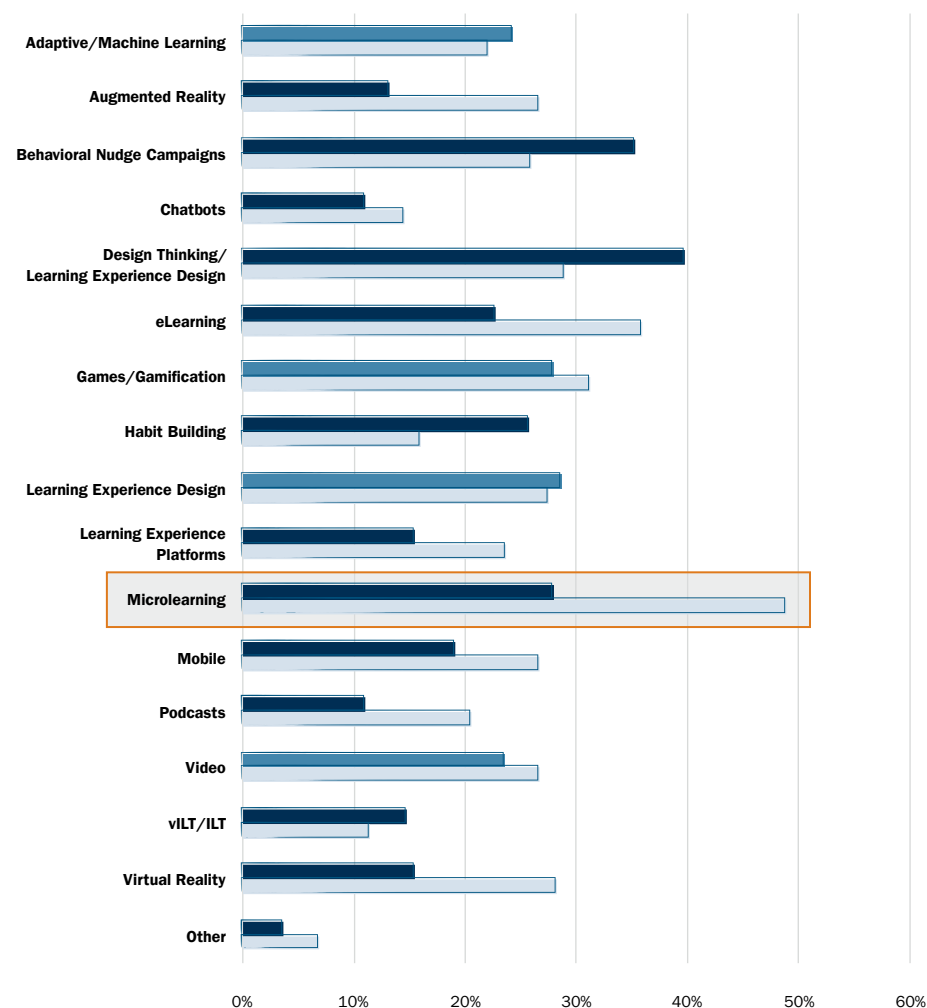
Research shows that as much as 40% of adult behavior is habit and routine. As we design experiences, instead of always starting from a blank canvas and trying to “train” employees through memorization and brute force, we have several new opportunities. We can support them through the creation of new habits (breaking old or building new), we can reinforce desired habits (through effective nudges), and we can help change the context of their work (through new cues or ways of working).

In building habits, there's lots of fun we can have. We can reference the work of thought leaders like BJ Fogg to craft simple ABC (anchor, behavior, celebration) loops that reinforce new actions. We can look at books like *Atomic Habits* by James Clear to intentionally stack habits to move us from very small changes to larger, more meaningful ones. Or we might even explore things like “temptation bundling” to pair new desired behaviors with existing loved ones (like watching a guilty-pleasure TV show while walking on the treadmill).



Q6: WHAT LEARNING TREND(S) OR DELIVERY METHOD(S) ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT FOR 2021?

Select all that apply.



In nudging, we're tasked with going way beyond the L&D classic "WIIFM" ("what's in it for me") or even the famous **Golden Circle** by Simon Sinek. As experience designers, we can learn from nudge units around the world or from our favorite online retailers by thinking about meaningful reminders that support remembering (it is still in the cart unpurchased!), showing performers how they compare to their peer group ("65% of those around you complete their taxes on time"), or by showing the pro-social (or pro-company) impact that individual behaviors can have ("your efforts enable us to ____").

Lastly, we have an opportunity to influence and change the flow of work itself. Why just ask performers to try to remember to do something differently when we can reshape the **moment of performance** itself? We already do a lot of performance support today, but we also have the opportunity to move further into the work context (not just preparing people for it, but directly influencing it). This may involve creating cues, adding new language/principles, shifting processes, changing environments, or redesigning routines and rituals. As in the case of the healthy food and junk food example earlier, the healthy food didn't make its way to eye level on accident. Someone took time to intentionally change that experience in the specific moment (the moment of food selection) to influence and promote desired behavior.

HOW MIGHT YOU DO THE SAME FOR ONE MOMENT OF PERFORMANCE THAT YOU INFLUENCE?



EMERGING AREAS OF UNCERTAINTY

*“The future cannot be predicted,
but futures can be invented.”*

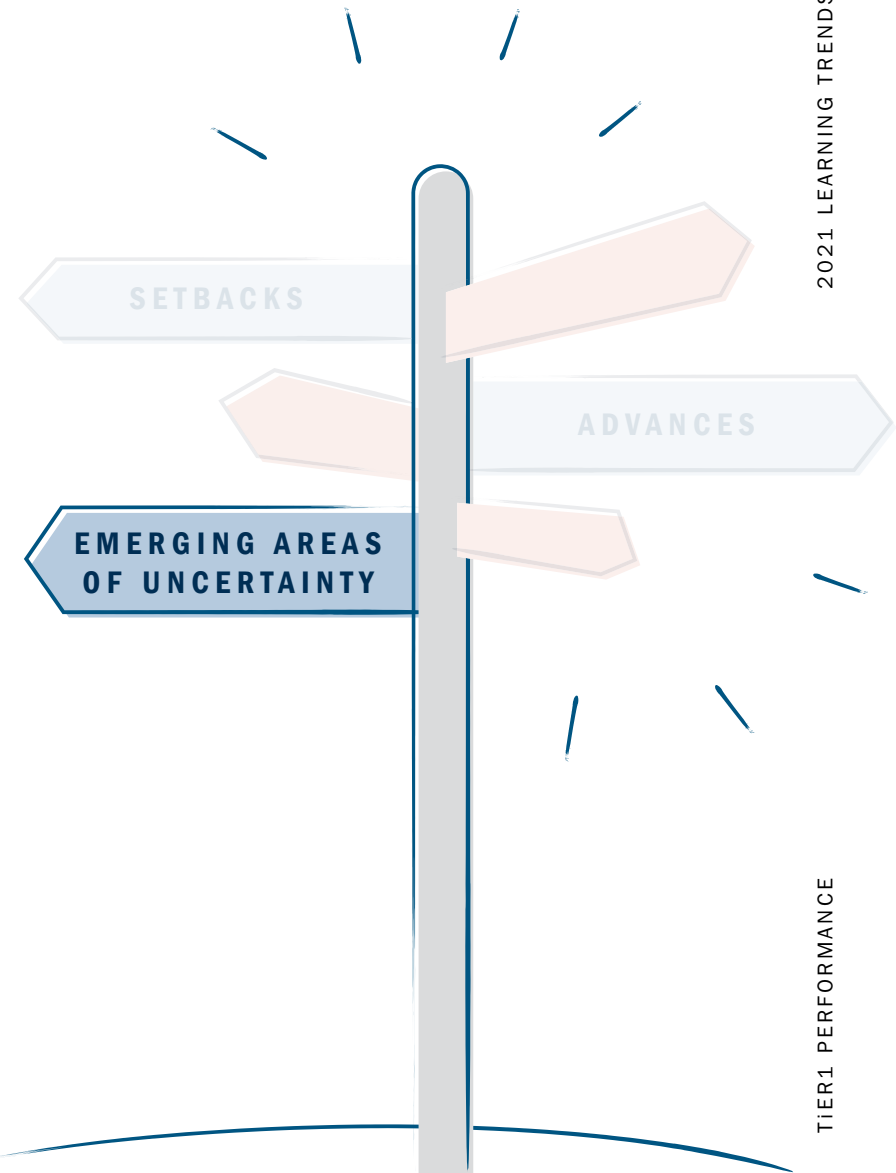
– Dennis Gabor

As we come to the end of this report, we’ve arrived at the exciting part: **the undetermined and unbounded potential of the future.** While 2020 introduced both setbacks and advances, the interesting turn for all of us is the mystery of what lies ahead. Even before 2020, we were heading to a crossroads. Technology is advancing, our role as learning professionals is changing, the workplace is evolving, and the skills required in the world are shifting.

Coming to the last group of insights, we have the opportunity to set aside preconceived notions and lean in to where the future might be taking us—and how we’re able to influence it.

INSIGHTS

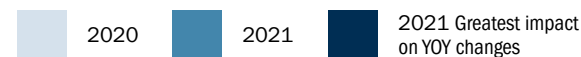
- 6. Performance is the common denominator.**
- 7. Data and prediction are the future, but they start with measurement.**



INSIGHT #6:

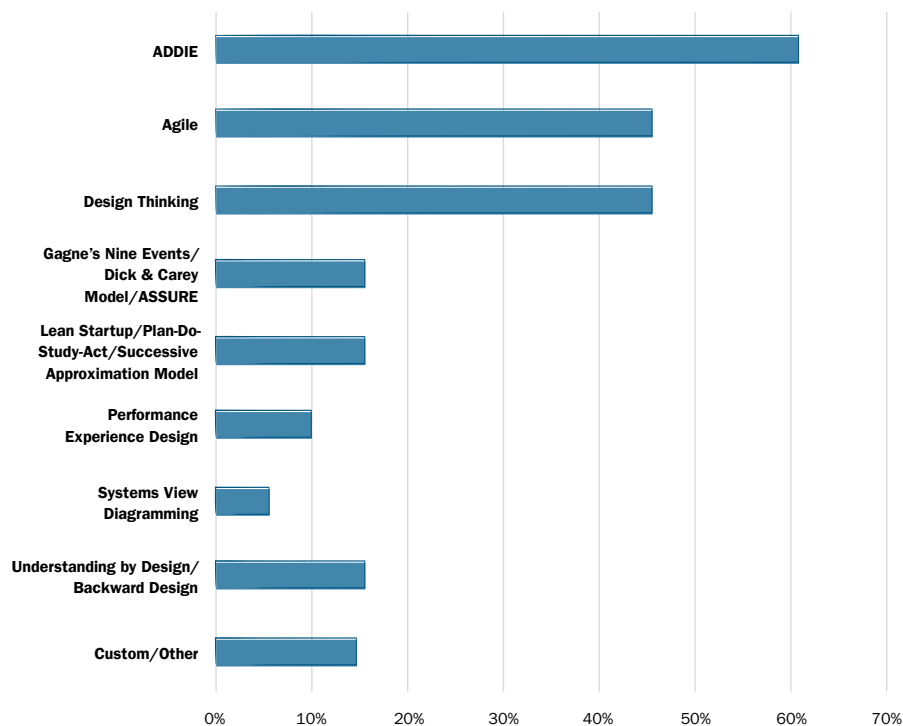
PERFORMANCE IS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR.

As learning professionals we're always evolving, and it feels like we're on the cusp of another big, stepwise evolution. We see this evolution as a shift to a focus on the performance experience. L&D's role as a differentiator for the success of the business is the future. In that future, we have the ability to enhance the **overall business performance** by designing for performance outcomes themselves, not just learning outcomes. That is the key.

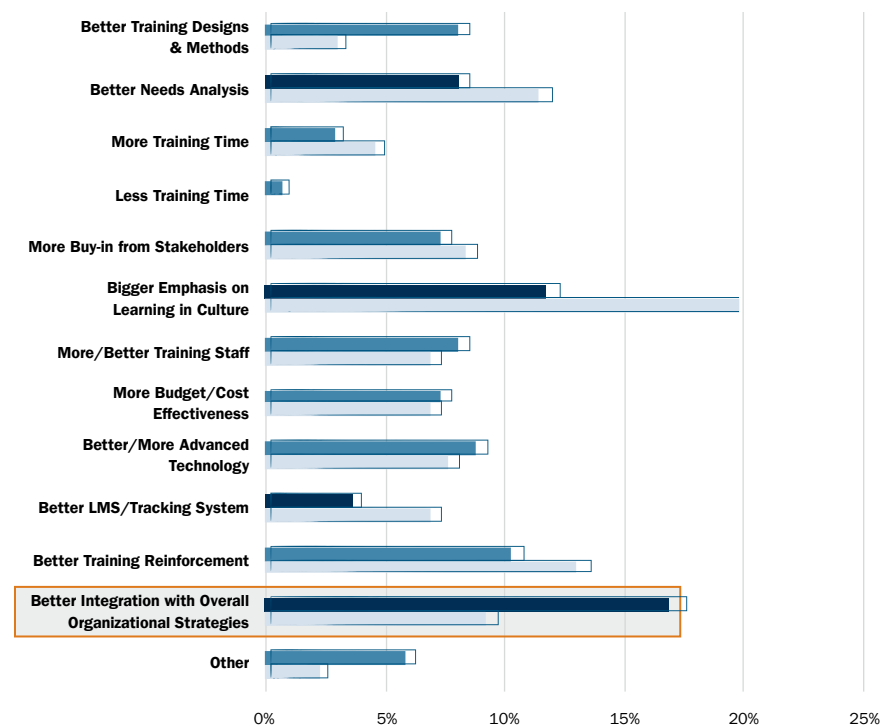


Q7 (NEW FOR 2021): WHAT PROCESS(ES) DOES YOUR TEAM EMPLOY IN THE DESIGN AND/OR DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR ASSETS?

Select all that apply.



Q11: IF YOU COULD IMPROVE ONE THING ABOUT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE AND/OR TRAINING AT YOUR ORGANIZATION IN 2021, WHAT WOULD IT BE?



In that vein, the emerging role of the **Transformer CLO** positions us to go beyond delivering learning assets and shift the future of strategy, capabilities, culture, and broader employee development. What does this mean for us and where we're headed? The survey data show L&D processes are shifting to be more iterative/agile and focused on performance; skills for success mirror what the business needs to drive results; and teams are in search of deeper integration and alignment with the broader business strategies. All of these things come about with a shift beyond learning to performance.

Our opportunity is to embrace key shifts that represent the biggest improvements in designing for performance (captured as “from > to” statements):

- **FROM thinking in parts TO thinking in systems**
- **FROM designing for “learning” (logical) TO designing for the whole human**
- **FROM designing for topics/content TO designing for moments**
- **FROM designing for individuals TO designing for social groups**
- **FROM focusing on instruction TO focusing on motivation and habit**
- **FROM using language to tell/explain TO using language to move hearts and minds**
- **FROM designing for the individual TO designing for the whole work context/environment**
- **FROM always designing new (programs/initiatives) TO looking to simplify, redesign, or align**

Anytime we’re developing a solution, keeping these shifts top of mind will help us take steps further towards a focus on performance.

In addition, the focus on performance can serve as a type of common language or the “Rosetta stone” across the organization, getting us out of our silos of “L&D,” “Talent,” “IT,” etc. Then we can focus on our shared audience (associates) and the shared experience we create (not just learning experiences, but the employee experience) with one common goal in mind—**performance and business results**. Performance and behavior change are the things we all have in common. This shift should enable us to move beyond the order-taking that sometimes happens when we’re hyper-focused on learning assets and elevate us to the space of problem-solving and consulting that comes from a performance-focused integration with the business.

Like the insights in this section, we’re unsure where the future will take us, or what the solution will be. But we’re certain that there’s something here. Your team’s focus on performance will only help us uncover the answer sooner, together.

INSIGHT #7:

DATA AND PREDICTION ARE THE FUTURE, BUT THEY START WITH MEASUREMENT.

As we shifted into 2021, the biggest thing that stood out in the data was that there were a lot of “safe” responses to Question 16. “Somewhat successful” was the most selected response. When compared year-over-year, more respondents skipped this question.

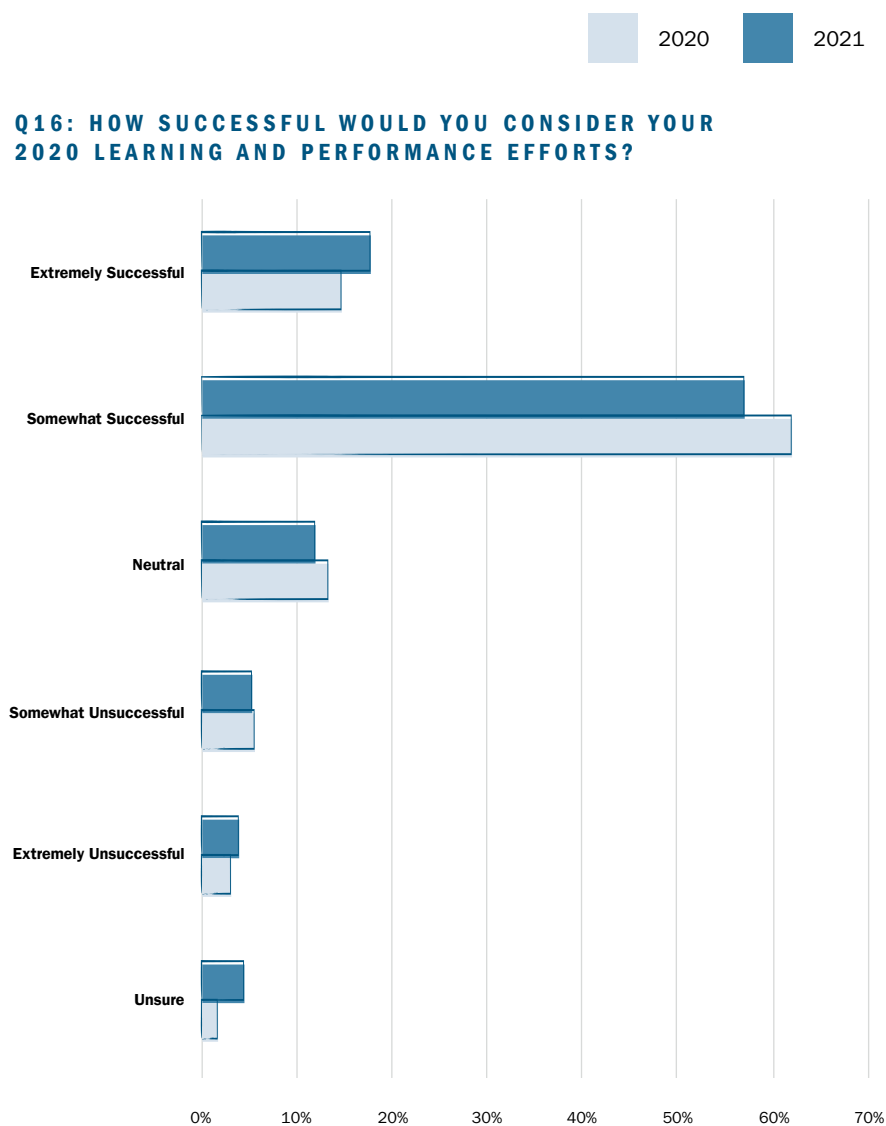
All in all, we’re interpreting this as a lack of confidence in solutions and how we measure their effectiveness. That corresponds to our last insight—that data and prediction are the future, but they start with effective measurement.

We all want to shepherd our organizations into the future of big data, learning algorithms, data visualization, predictive analytics, etc. However, to get there, we have to start with the actual collection of data—and ensure that our data is **relevant** and **meaningful**.

As professionals, our history here is mixed. Sometimes, our impact isn’t being measured at all, and in places where we measure consistently, it may be very baseline completion.

Our field has many thought leaders in this space. Kirkpatrick, Brinkerhoff, and Jack and Patti Phillips come to mind. At TiER1, we look to Will Thalheimer and the **LTEM** (Learning-Transfer Evaluation) framework, performance-focused learner surveys, and his new work on LEADS (Learning Evaluation As Decision Support). Will is leading the learning and development field into the future of evaluation, focusing on how we use evaluations to make decisions and take actions that improve our effectiveness and results.

As we continue elevating how we measure learning and performance experiences, starting with the broader LTEM framework and specific improvements to your surveys provides a foundation for sound evaluation and clean data. Only from that solid foundation can we move forward with collecting, visualizing, interpreting, and leveraging that data in new and imaginative ways.



CONCLUSIONS

2020 certainly was a milestone year. It has challenged us, stretched us, and even baffled us. However, further into the future, it's likely to stand out as a turning point in many ways and for many causes.

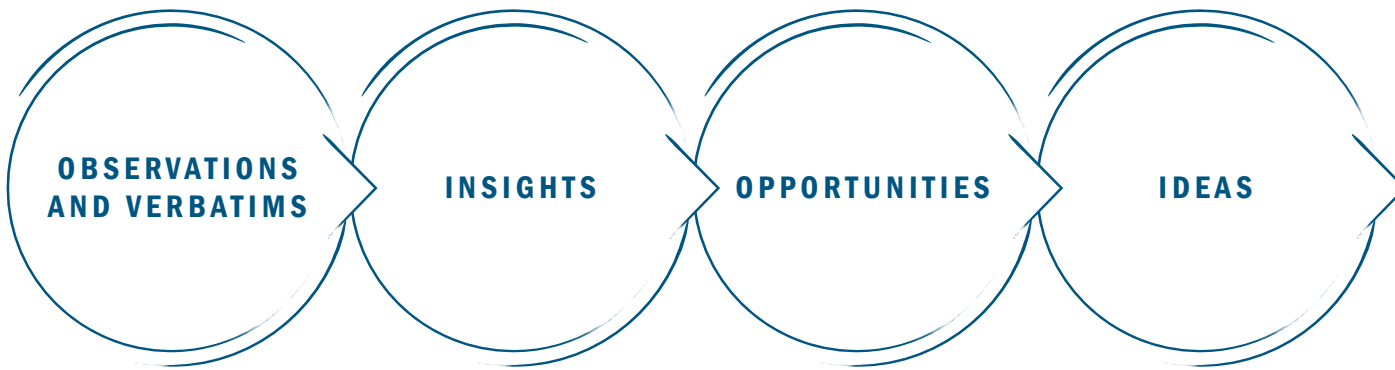
Even if you focus on only one area—like virtualization—you can see a multitude of advancements. Rapid platform adoption, changes to our working norms, new or evolved experiences in the space, upskilling of facilitation techniques, virtual collaboration whiteboards, shared documents, and some fun and friendly memes/images/GIFs. That's only one lens, one modality of engagement, in one space where we work.

In this report, we've looked at seven broad insights:

- 1. We're unsure how to bring our best design and development practices into the virtual/remote space.**
- 2. Knowledge transfer is harder when meeting face-to-face is impractical.**
- 3. Motivation and engagement are at an all-time low – so training efficiency needs to be at an all-time high.**
- 4. Meaningful progress, connection, and platforms matter.**
- 5. “Learning” continues to get smaller and smaller and “doing” continues to rise.**
- 6. Performance is the common denominator.**
- 7. Data and prediction are the future, but they start with measurement.**

They're just insights, not answers. They're leading indicators, clues, early signals—all from a community of professionals sensing and evaluating their own journeys in their own organizations. Thank you for contributing.





Finally, an ask of you as innovators in the field. With time, those insights will give way to more obvious opportunities and, eventually, to related ideas and solutions. Please, keep in touch along your journey and share back with the rest of us so we can grow together. If you're feeling a bit behind, reach out for help. If you're leading the pack, share your wisdom for others to learn and grow from.

2020 has been a year of digital connection, but also of social isolation. As you move forward, **remember you're part of a global community of professionals**. Embrace a focus on performance and do your best work this year. Together, we'll drive the growth and development of individuals, the successes of teams, and the outcomes of whole organizations.

TO THE CREATION OF A BETTER WORLD!

improving
ORGANIZATIONS
through the
PERFORMANCE
of PEOPLE to BUILD
A BETTER
World

ABOUT THIS REPORT

THIS REPORT IS BASED ON A SURVEY WE DISTRIBUTE ANNUALLY.

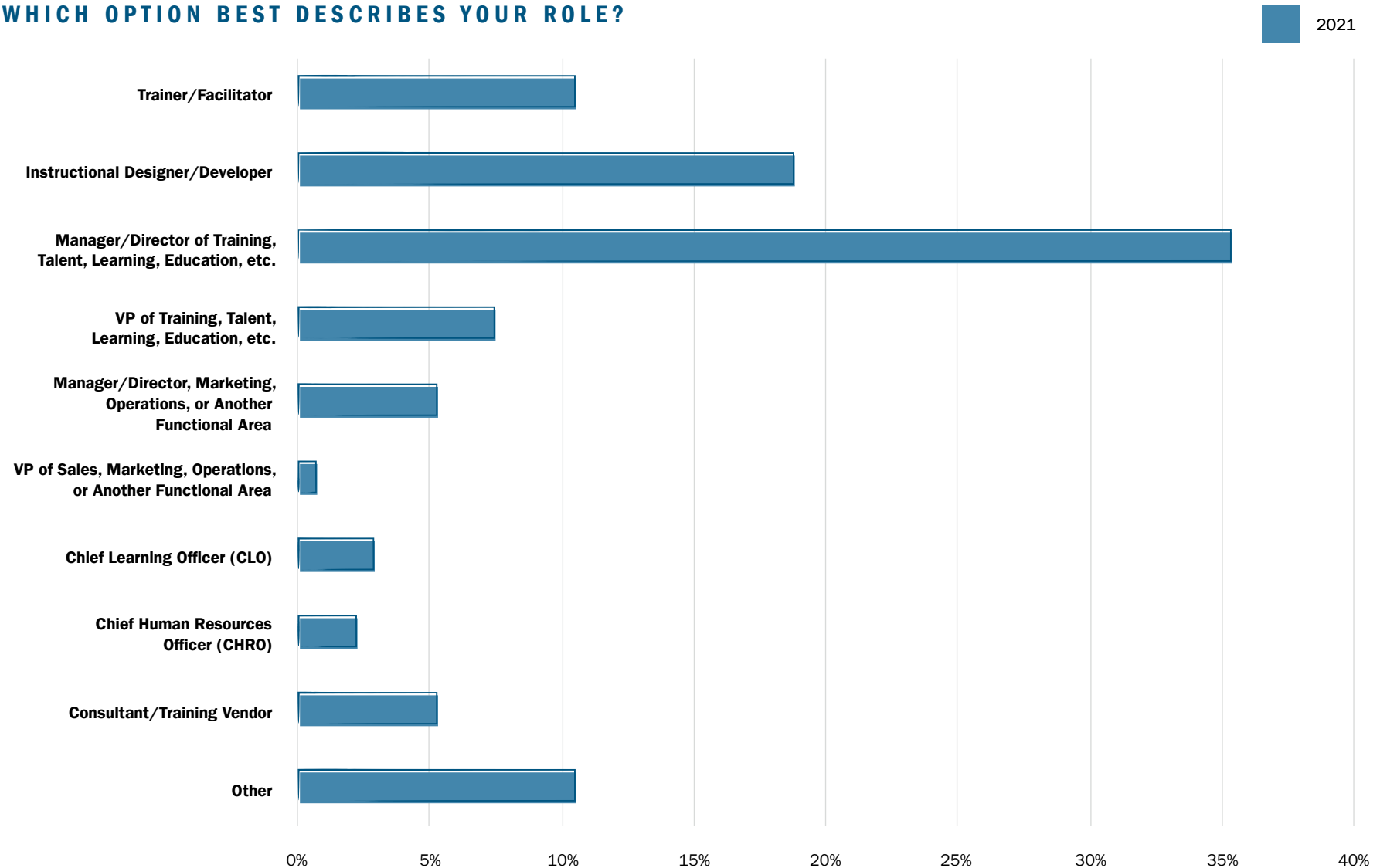
To gather our data, we sent a 17-question survey to TiER1 clients and other learning professionals who subscribe to our newsletter. We also posted a link to the survey across our social media channels. The survey was open from 1/14/2021 to 2/15/2021 and had 136 responses.

When appropriate, we compared the results to our 2020 reports. (Reports prior to 2020 were published by Bottom-Line Performance, Inc., which was acquired by TiER1 Performance in August 2019.)

WHO RESPONDED?

More than 55% of respondents are at the manager, director, or VP level in their organization, and most are in roles directly related to training, talent, or learning. Nearly 30% of respondents are instructional designers or trainers. The remainder of respondents consider themselves consultants or external training vendors. This represents an 11% increase in manager/director/VP respondents over last year with corresponding decreases in the percentage of ID/trainer roles and consultant roles responding.

WHICH OPTION BEST DESCRIBES YOUR ROLE?



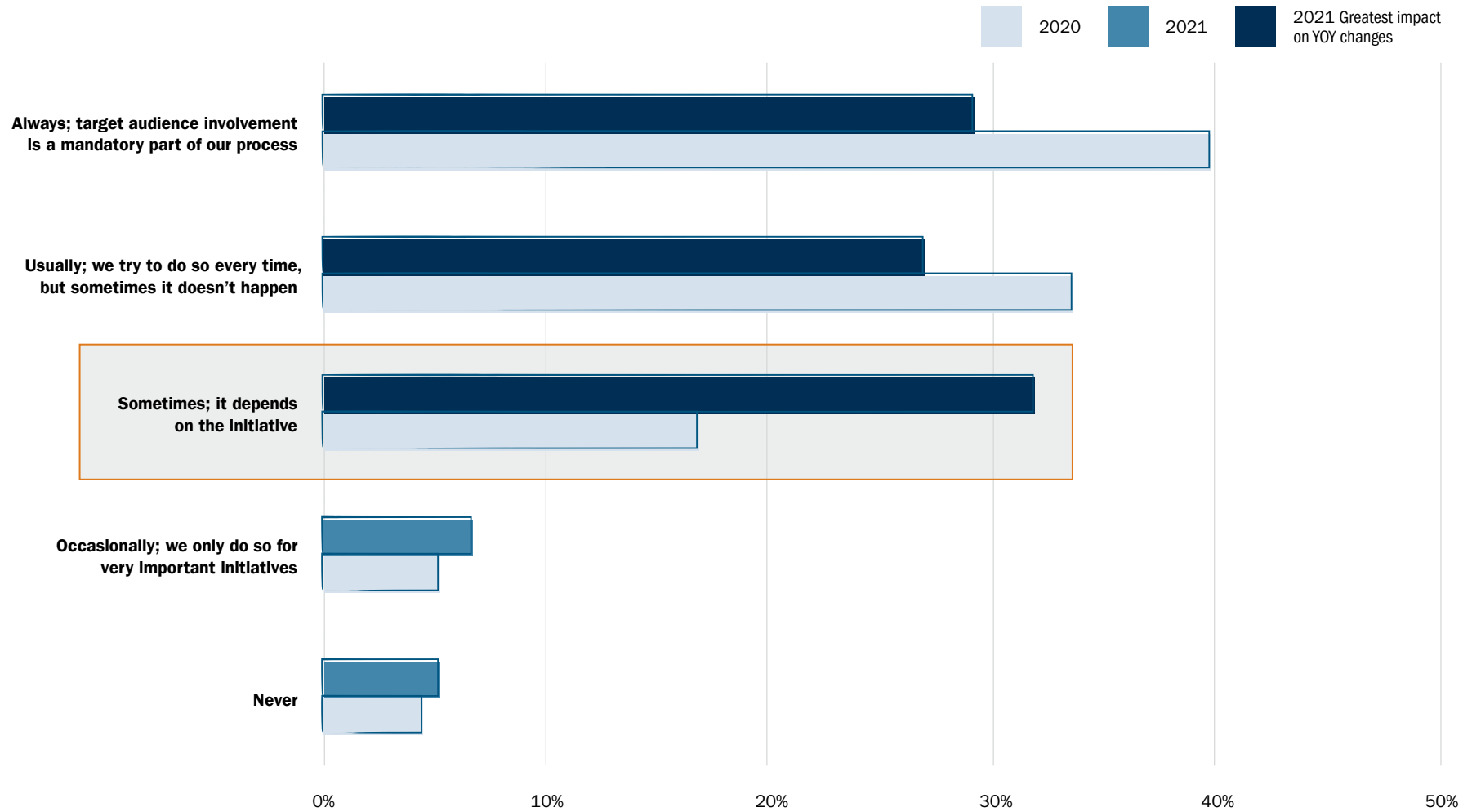
FULL SURVEY RESULTS

IN THE GRAPHS THAT FOLLOW, WE DISPLAY YEAR-OVER-YEAR RESPONSES BETWEEN 2021 AND 2020.

Whenever there was a significant change between the 2020 and 2021 responses, we indicate those factors that had the greatest impact on year-over-year change in dark blue. Where appropriate, we also highlight the single factor that had the greatest impact on the year-over-year change.

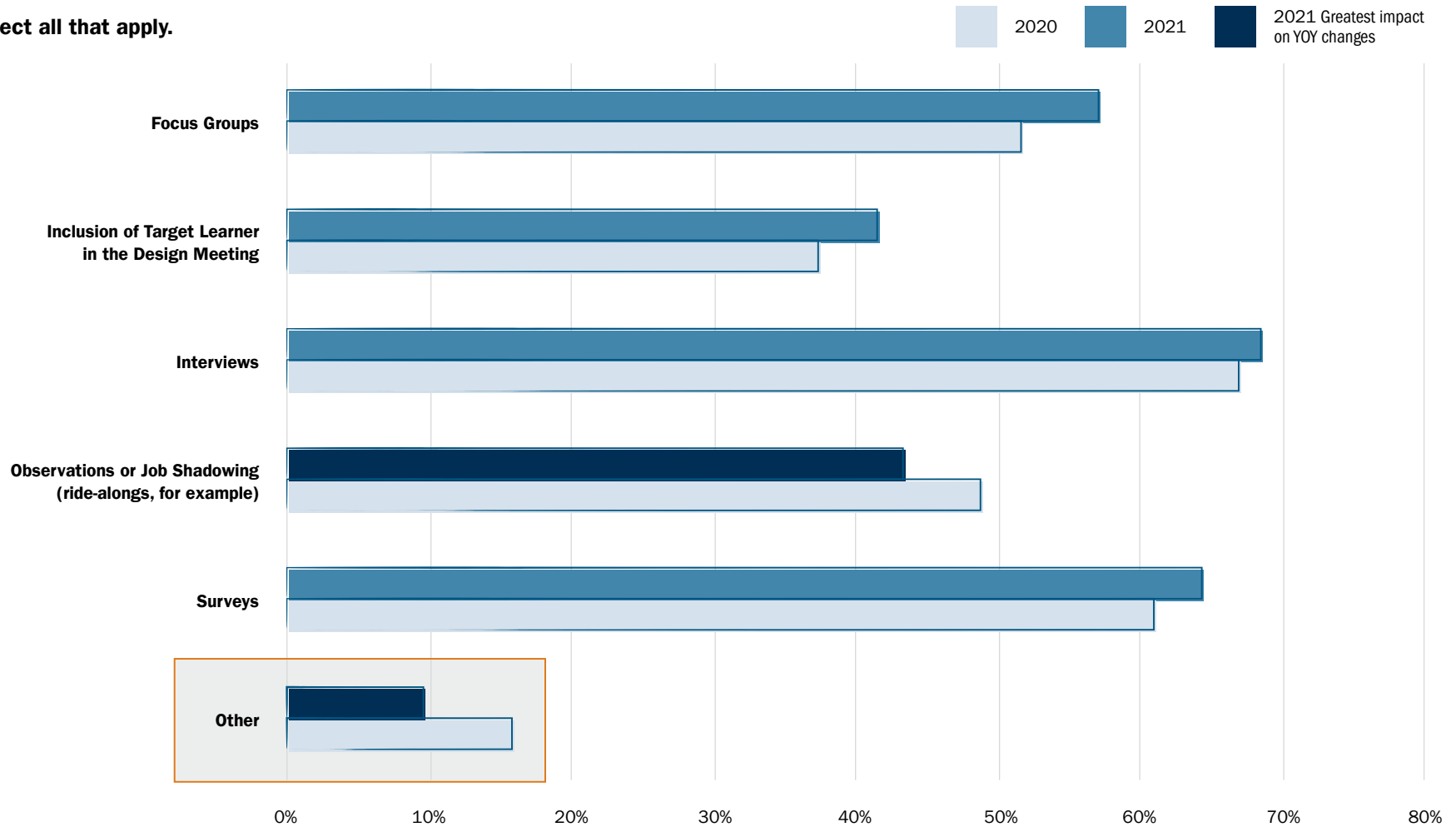


Q1: HOW OFTEN DO YOU INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN YOUR DESIGN PROCESS?

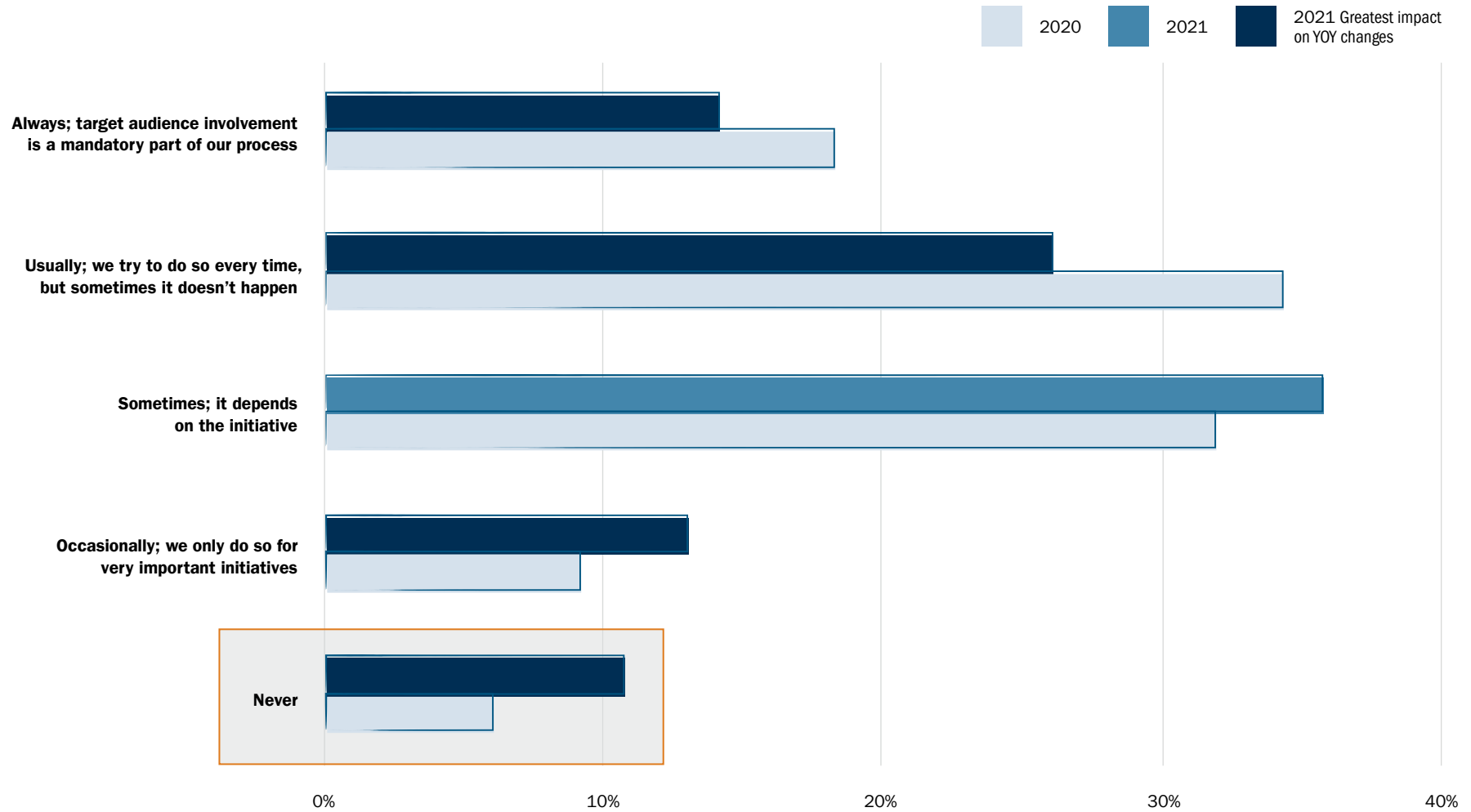


Q2: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING METHOD(S) DO YOU USE TO INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN THE TRAINING DESIGN PROCESS?

Select all that apply.

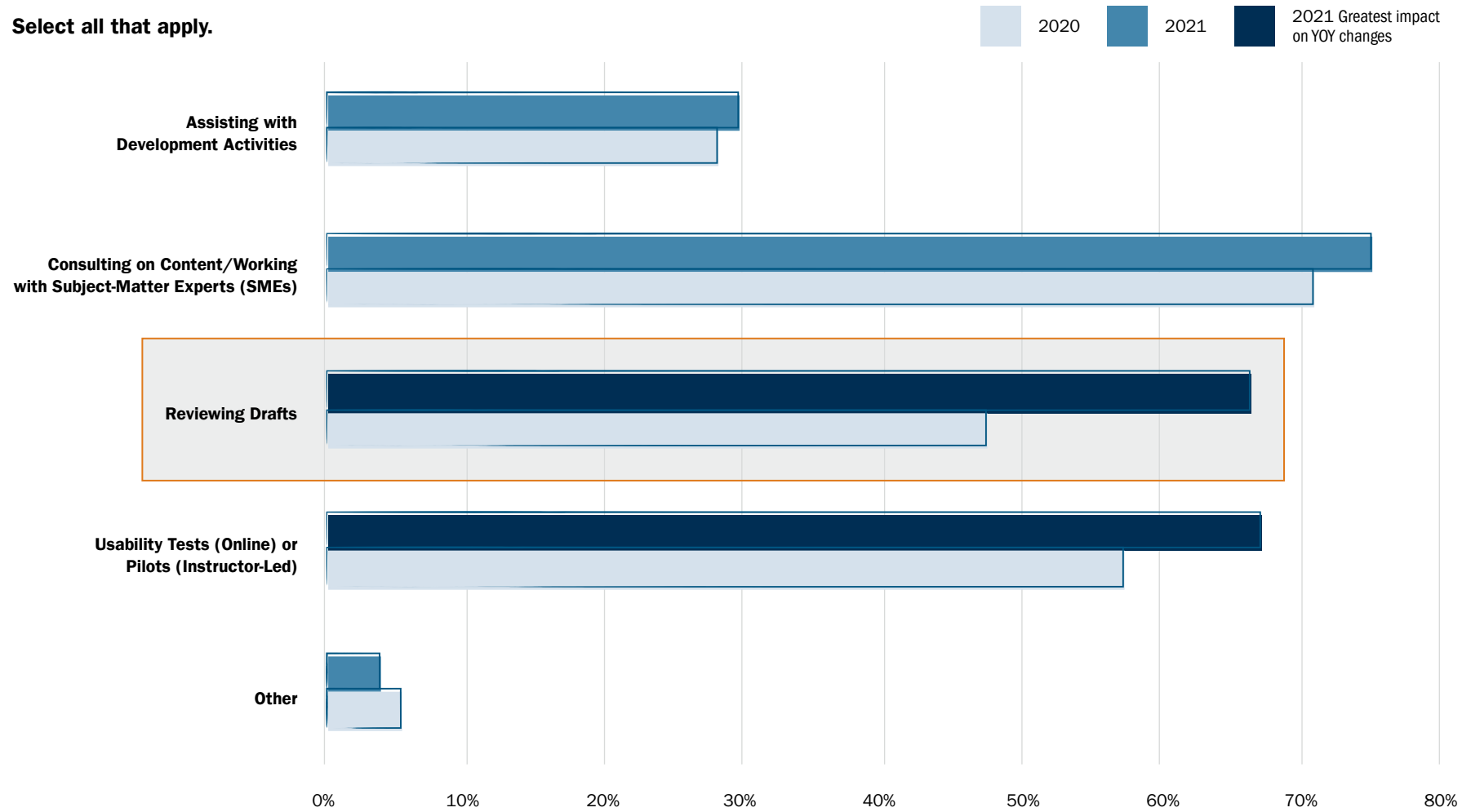


Q3: HOW OFTEN DO YOU INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?



Q4: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PROCESS(ES) DO YOU USE TO INCLUDE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AS PART OF THE TRAINING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

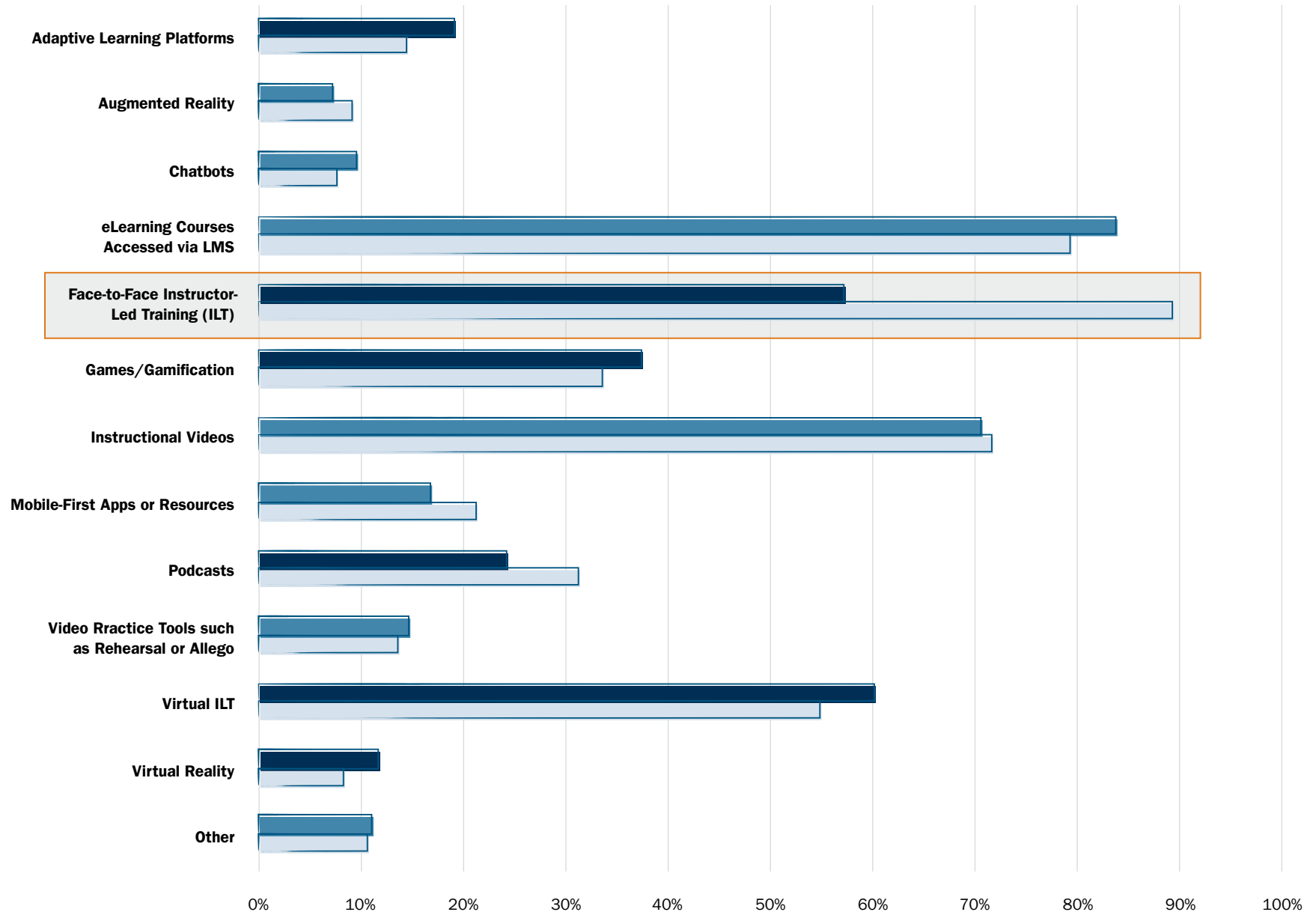
Select all that apply.



Q5: WHAT METHOD(S) WILL YOU (OR YOUR ORGANIZATION) USE TO DELIVER TRAINING IN 2021?

Select all that apply.

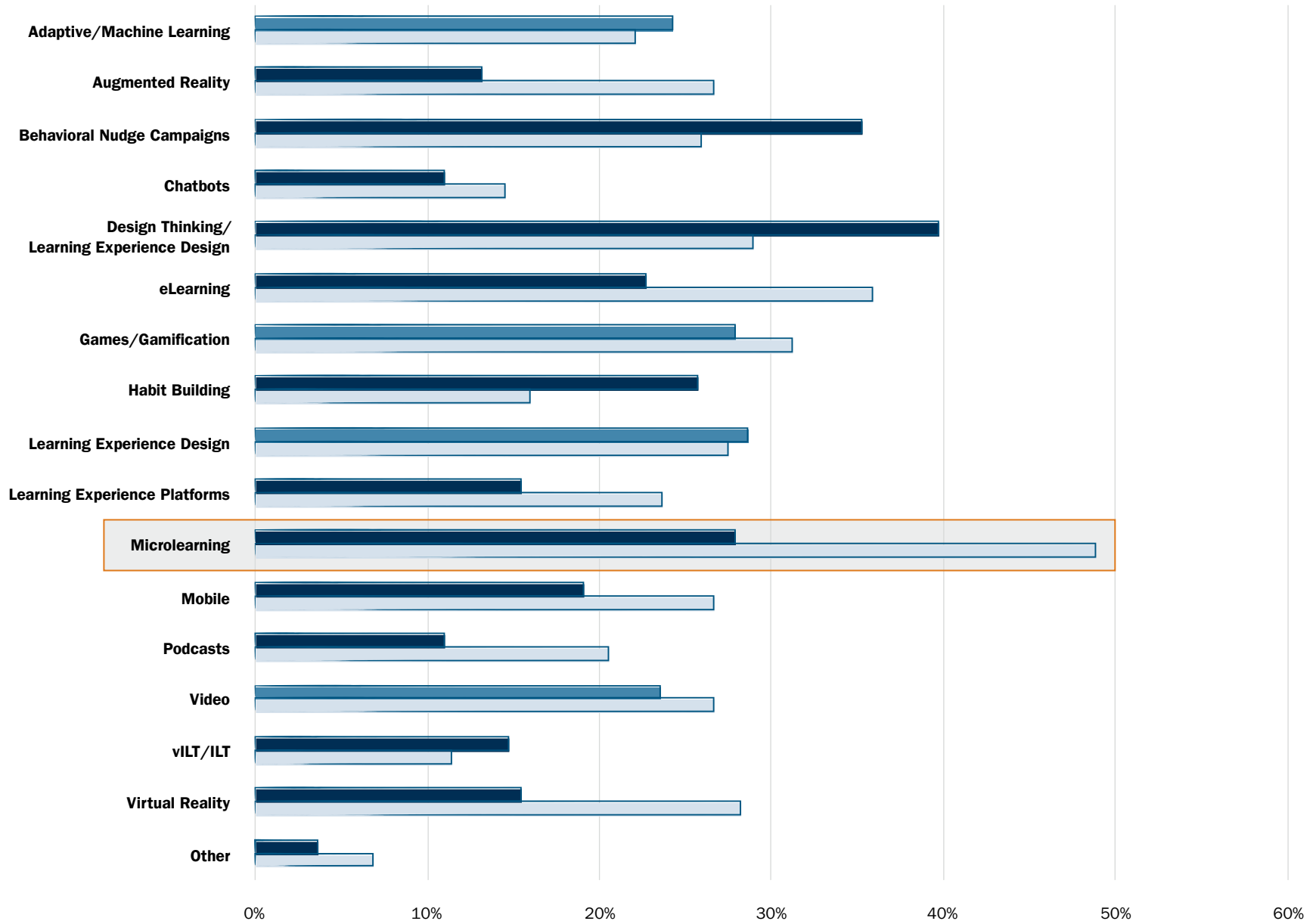
2020 2021 2021 Greatest impact on YOY changes



Q6: WHAT LEARNING TREND(S) OR DELIVERY METHOD(S) ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT FOR 2021?

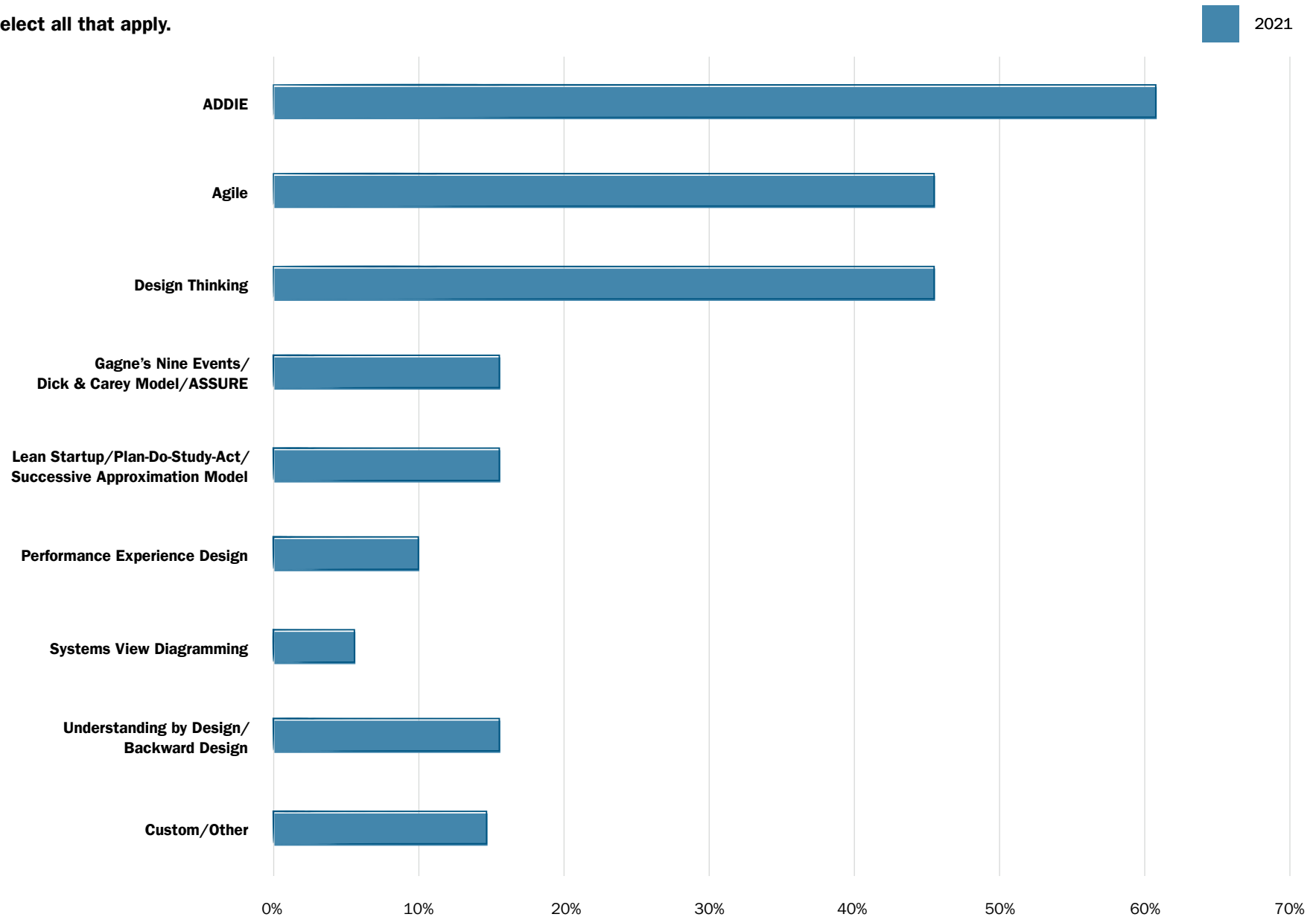
Select all that apply.

2020 2021 2021 Greatest impact on YOY changes



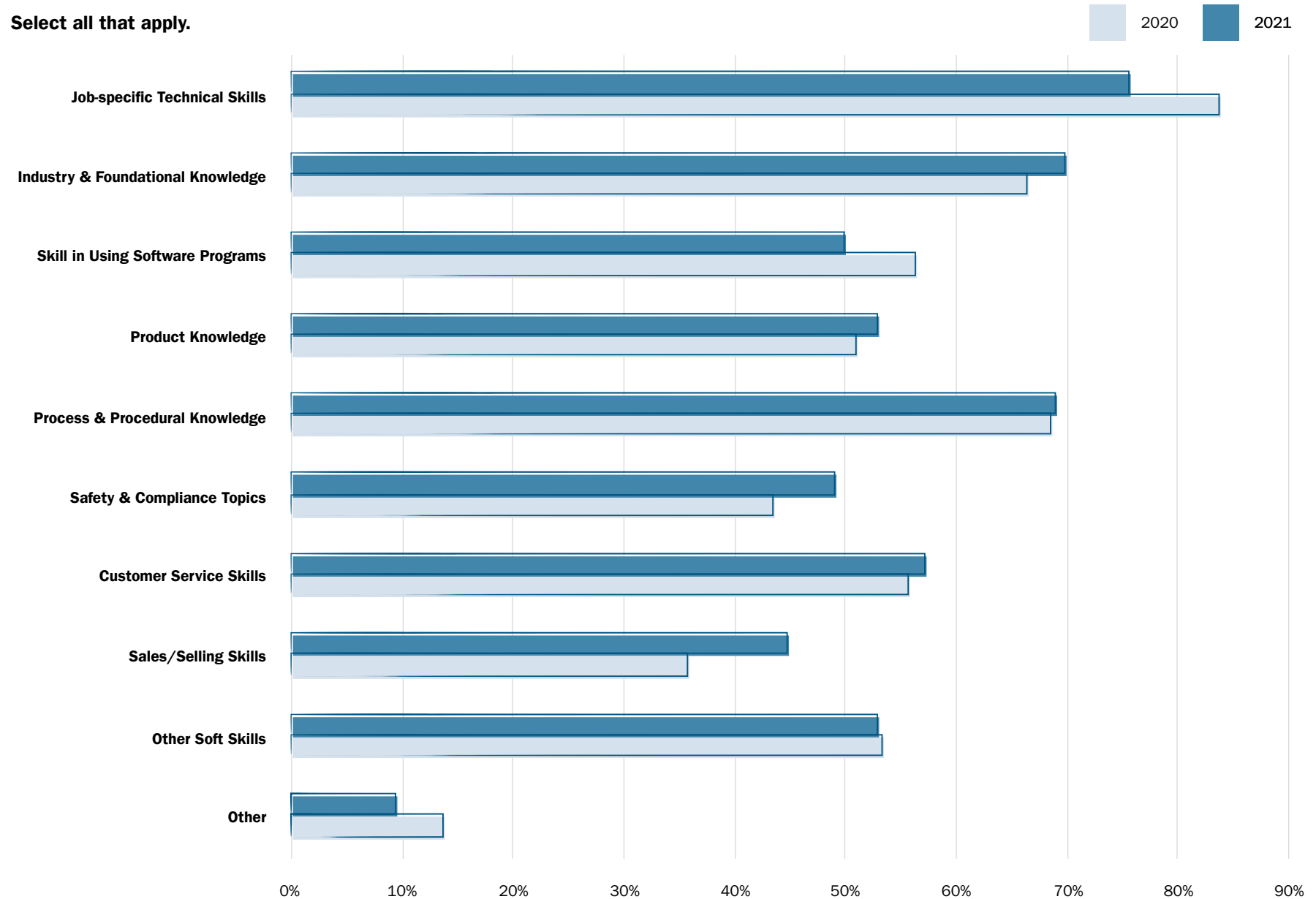
Q7 (NEW FOR 2021): WHAT PROCESS(ES) DOES YOUR TEAM EMPLOY IN THE DESIGN AND/OR DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR ASSETS?

Select all that apply.



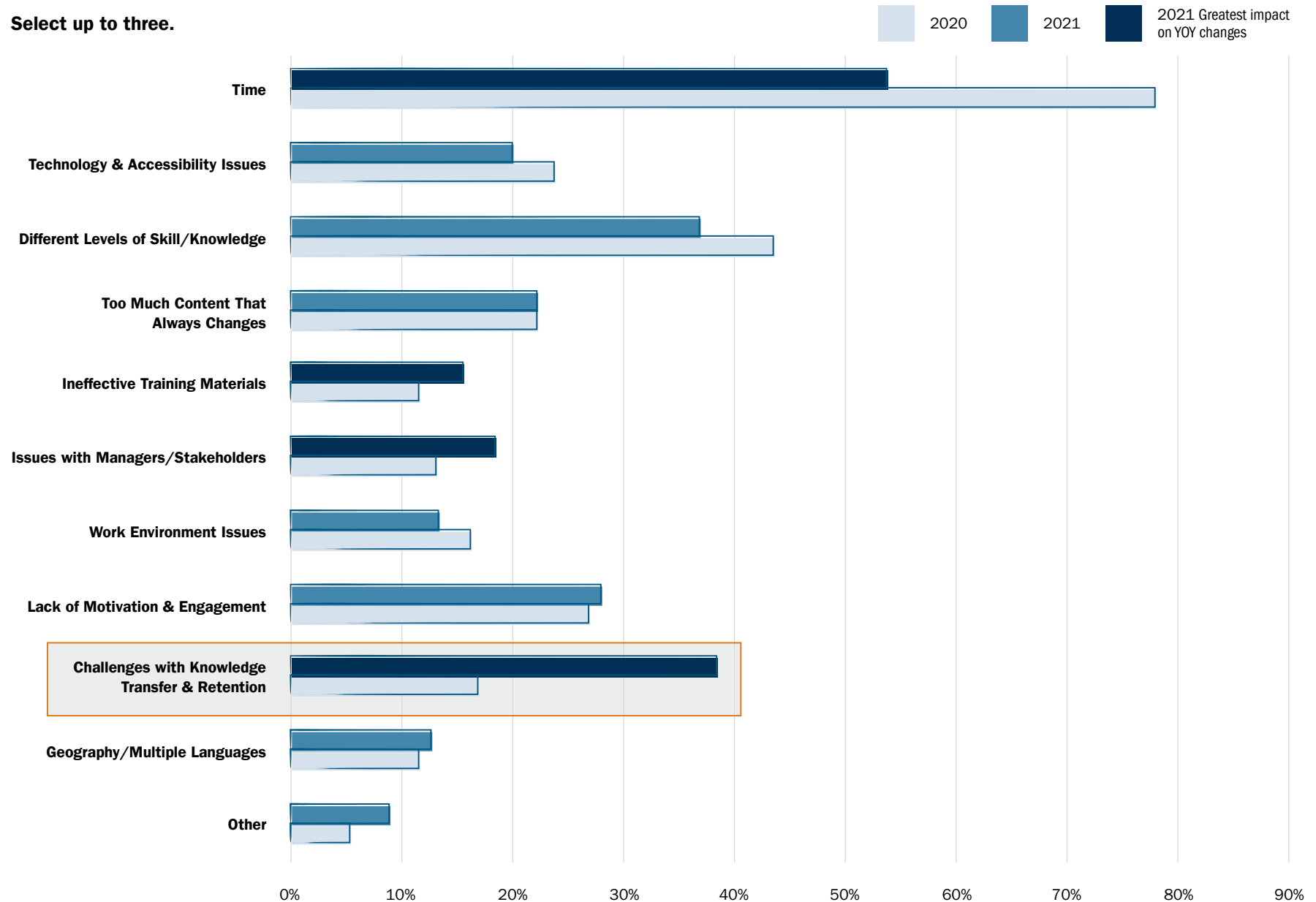
Q8: WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND/OR SKILLS DO MEMBERS OF YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE NEED TO HAVE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR JOBS?

Select all that apply.



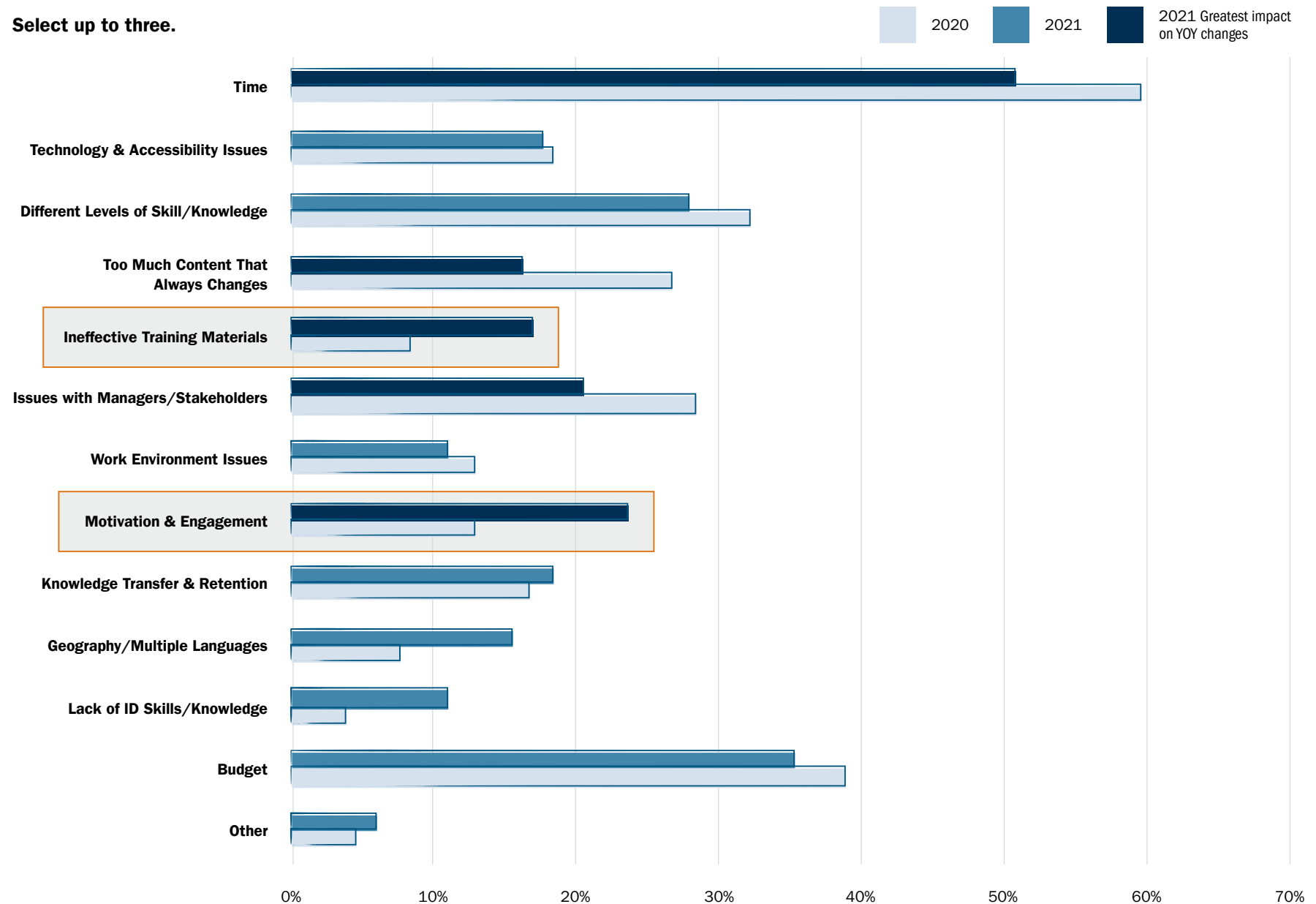
Q9: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOUR TARGET LEARNERS FACE THAT MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO BUILD THE KNOWLEDGE/ SKILLS THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

Select up to three.

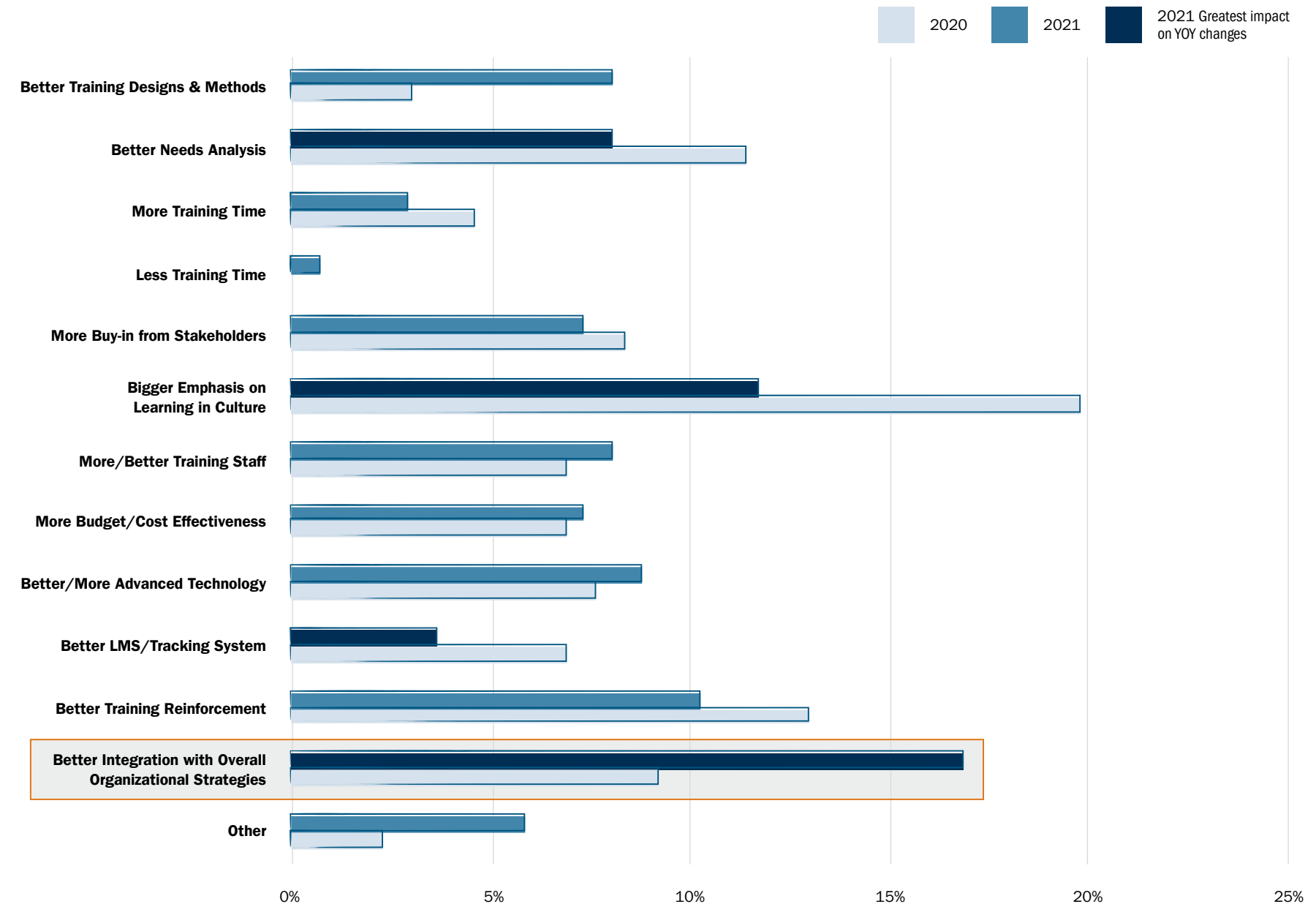


Q10: WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE WHEN YOU TRY TO HELP THESE LEARNERS BUILD THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS?

Select up to three.



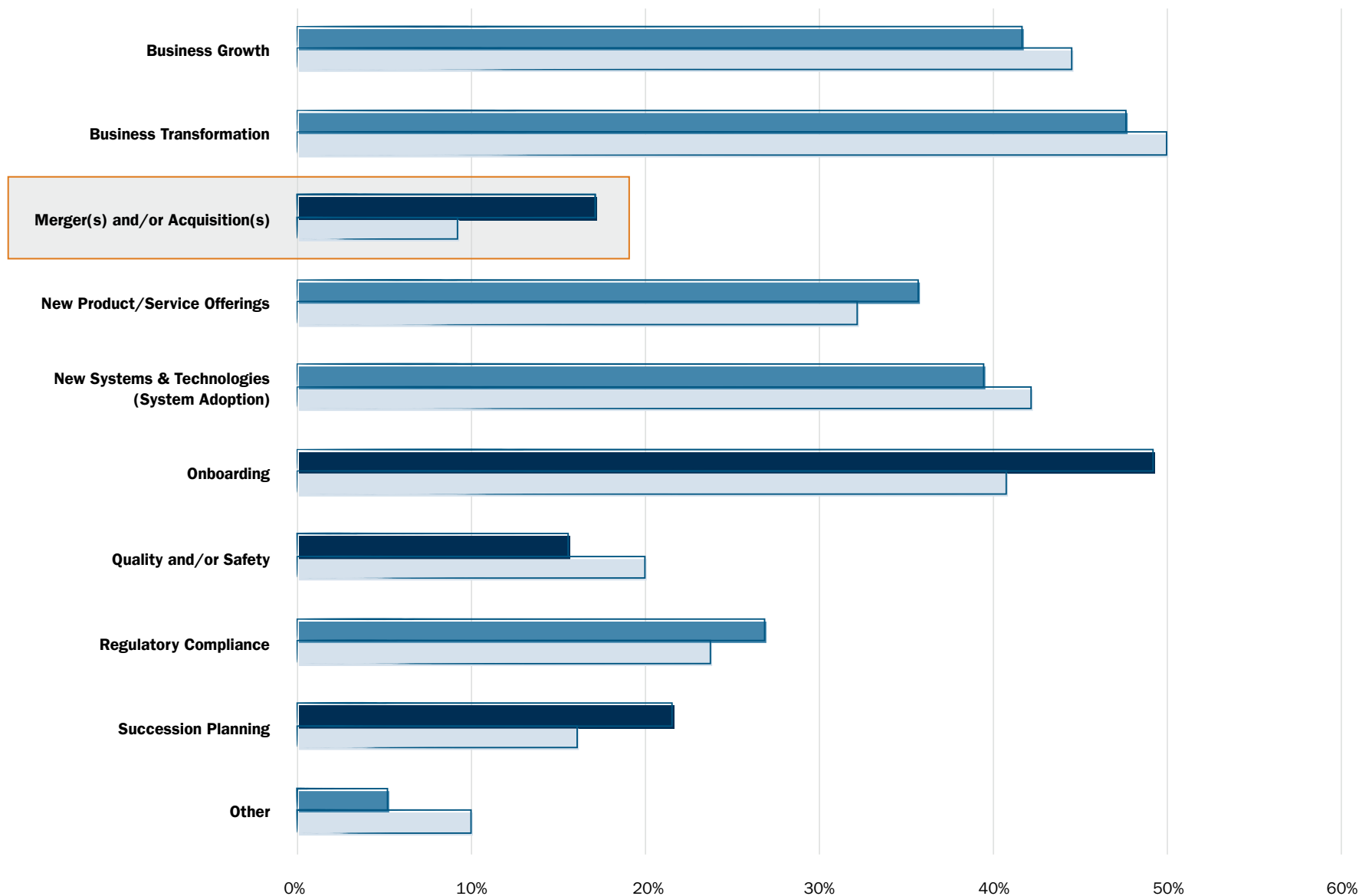
Q11: IF YOU COULD IMPROVE ONE THING ABOUT LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE AND/OR TRAINING AT YOUR ORGANIZATION IN 2021, WHAT WOULD IT BE?



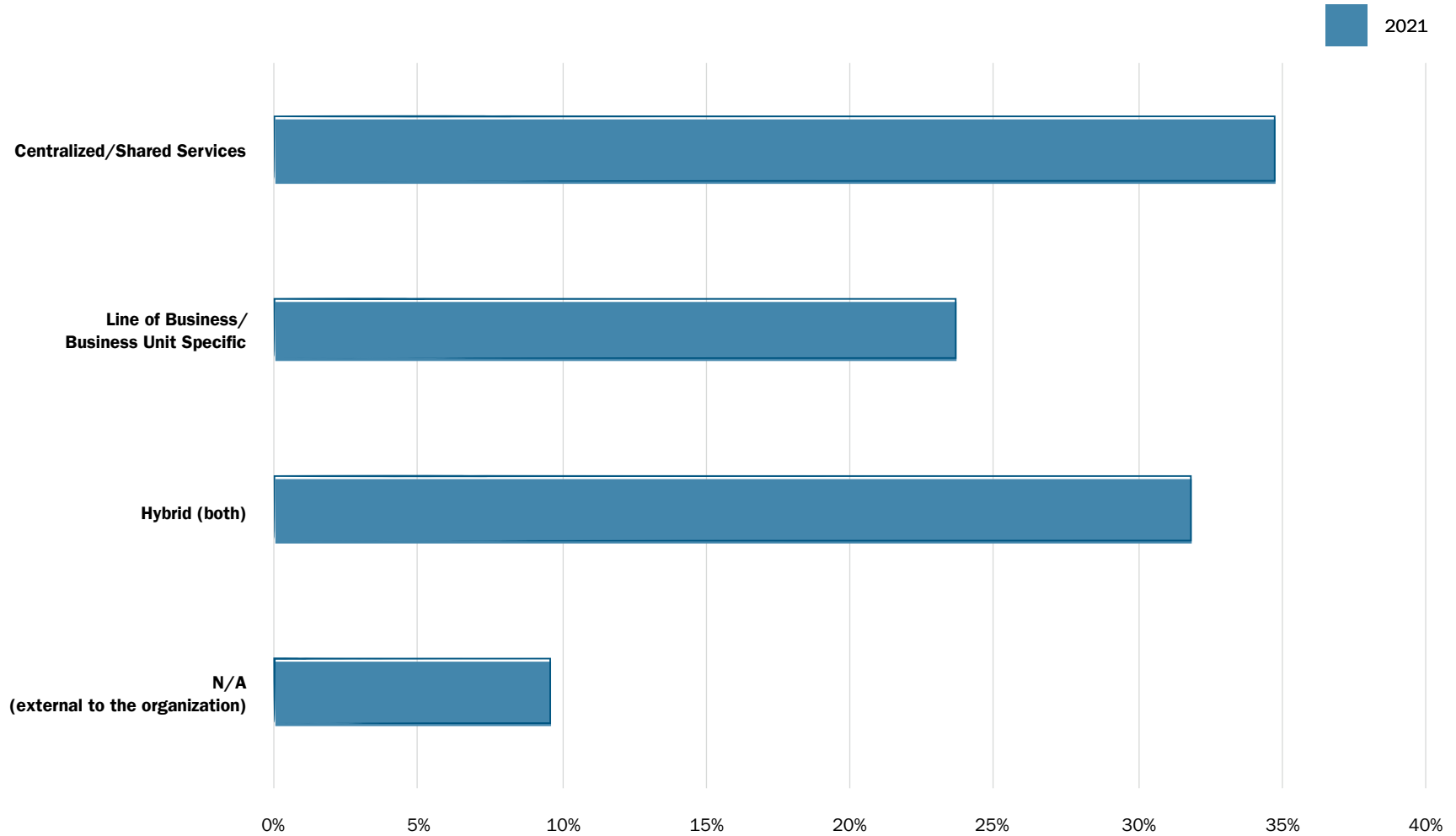
Q12: WHAT ARE THE ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT CREATE YOUR HIGHEST DEMAND FOR LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE?

Select all that apply.

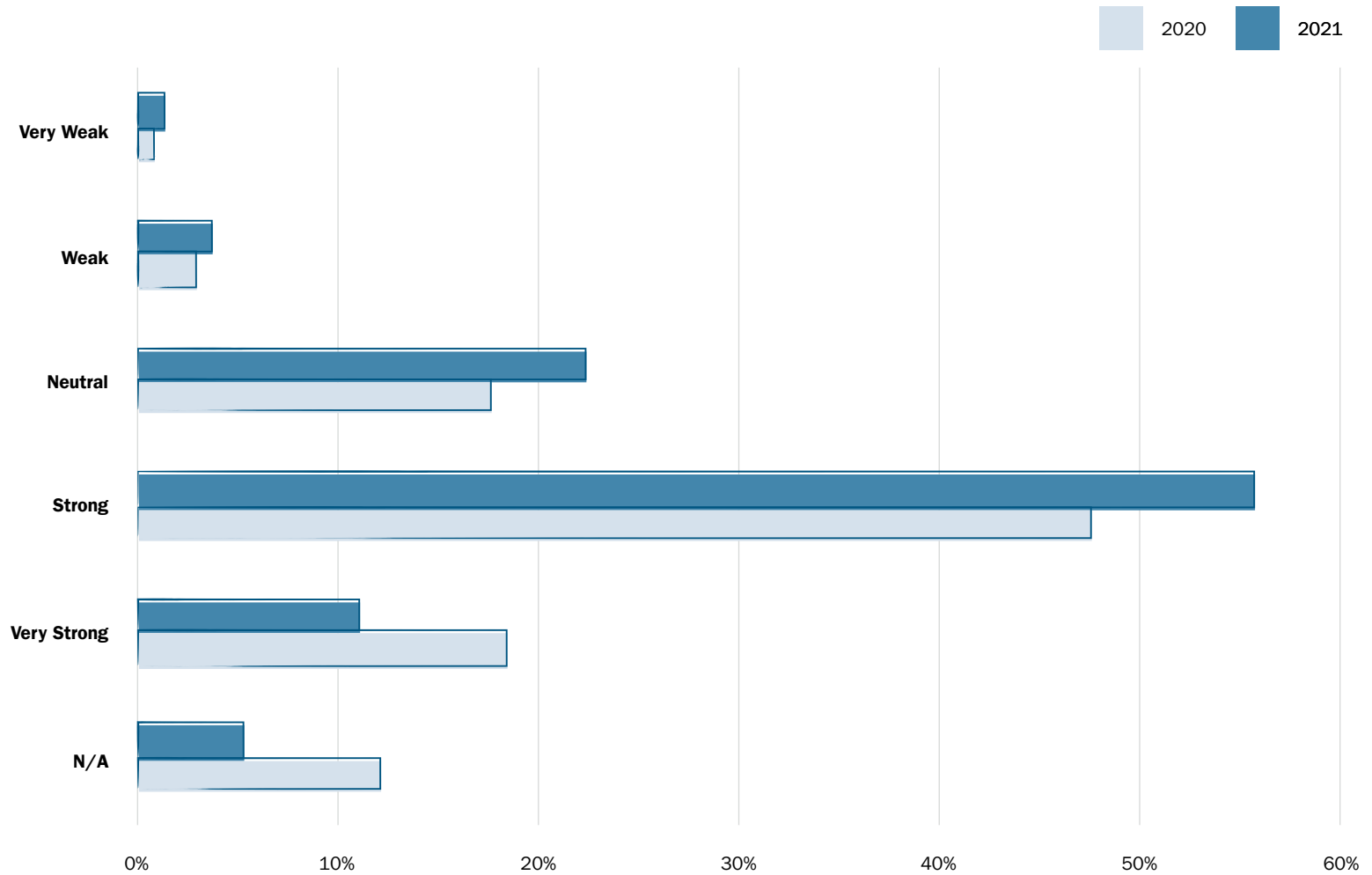
2020 2021 2021 Greatest impact on YOY changes



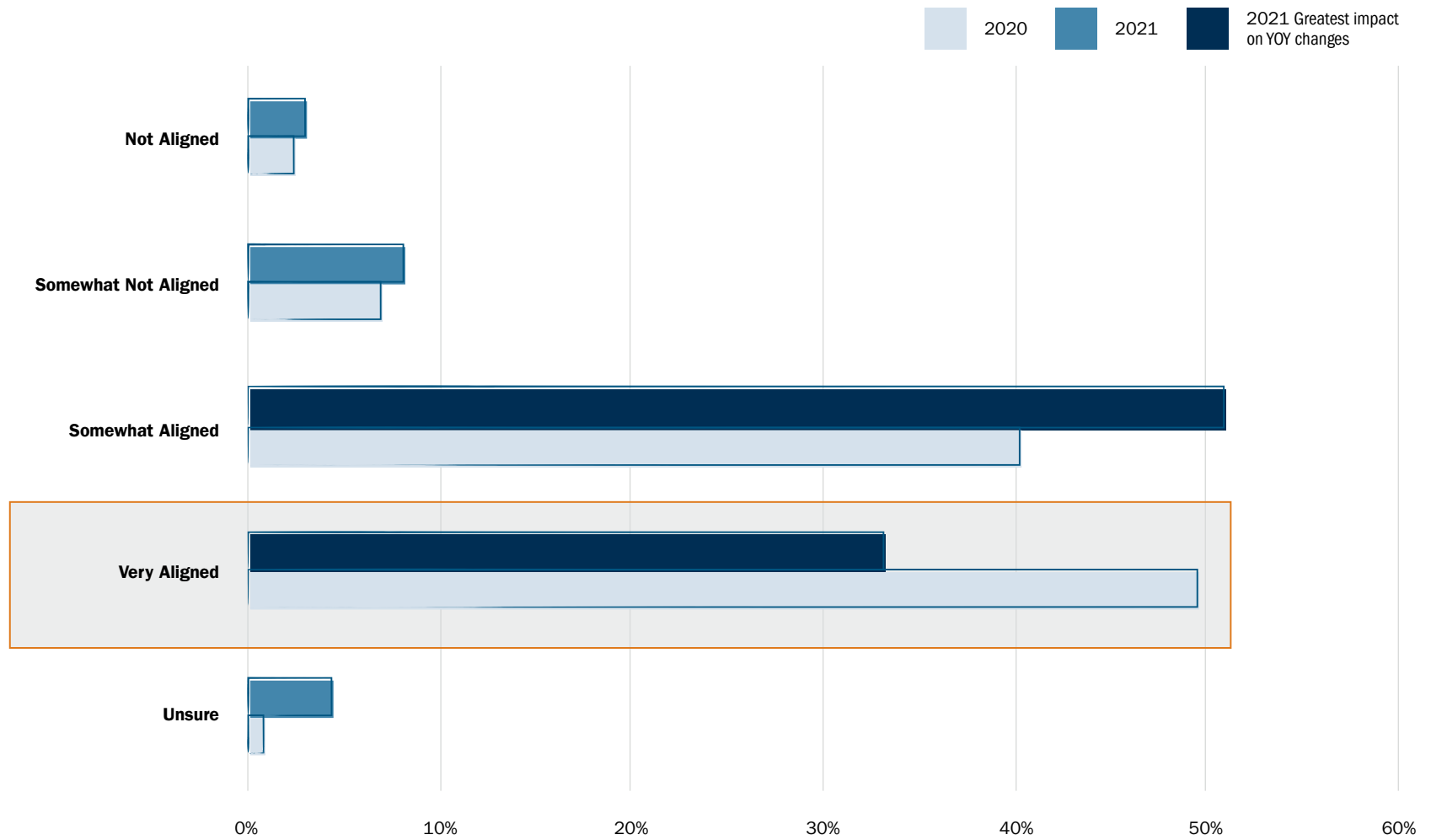
Q13 (NEW FOR 2021): HOW IS YOUR TEAM STRUCTURED IN RELATION TO THE ORGANIZATION?



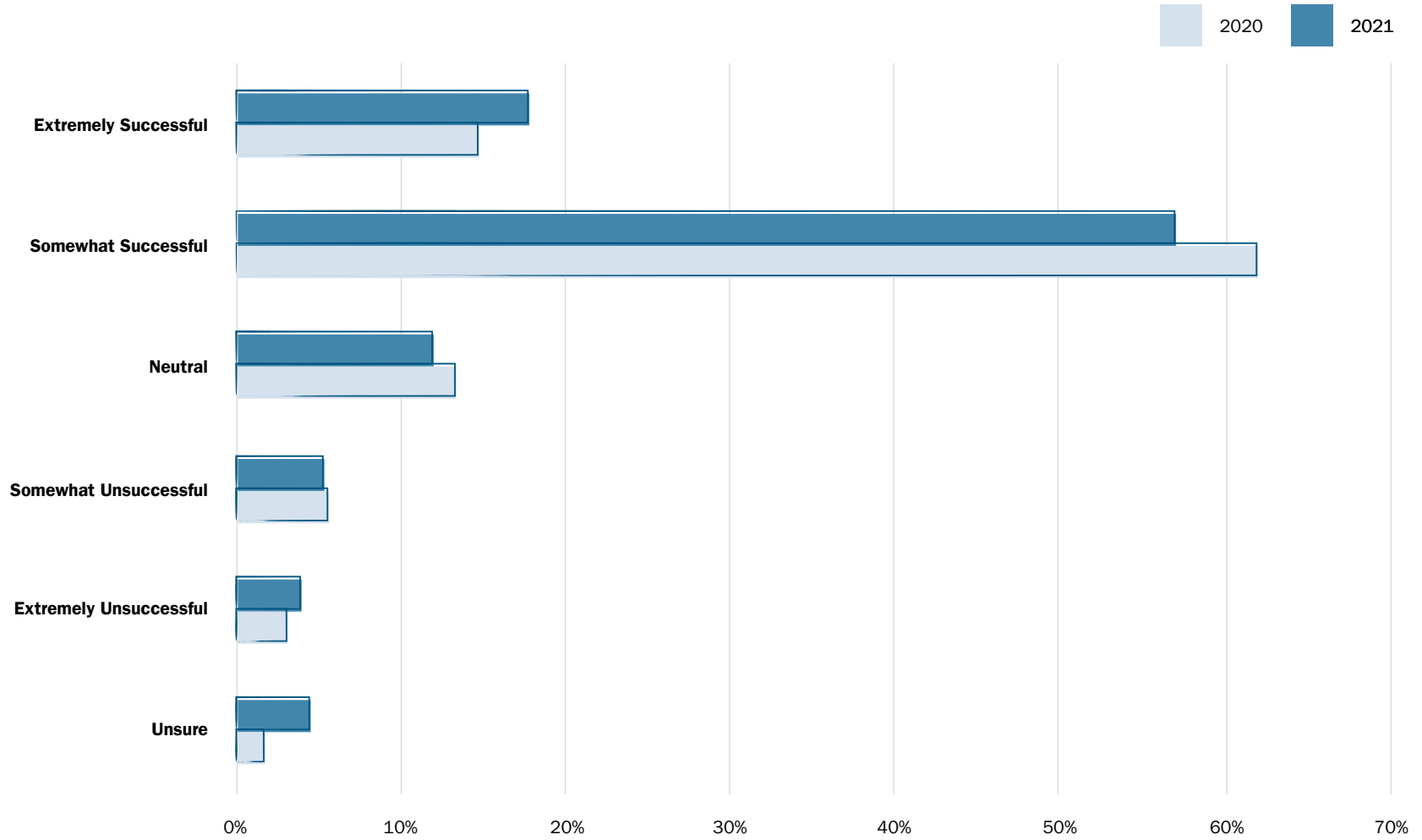
Q14: ON AVERAGE, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR TYPICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BUSINESS SPONSORS?



Q15: ON AVERAGE, HOW ALIGNED ARE YOUR LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE EFFORTS WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION'S OVERALL STRATEGIC INITIATIVES?

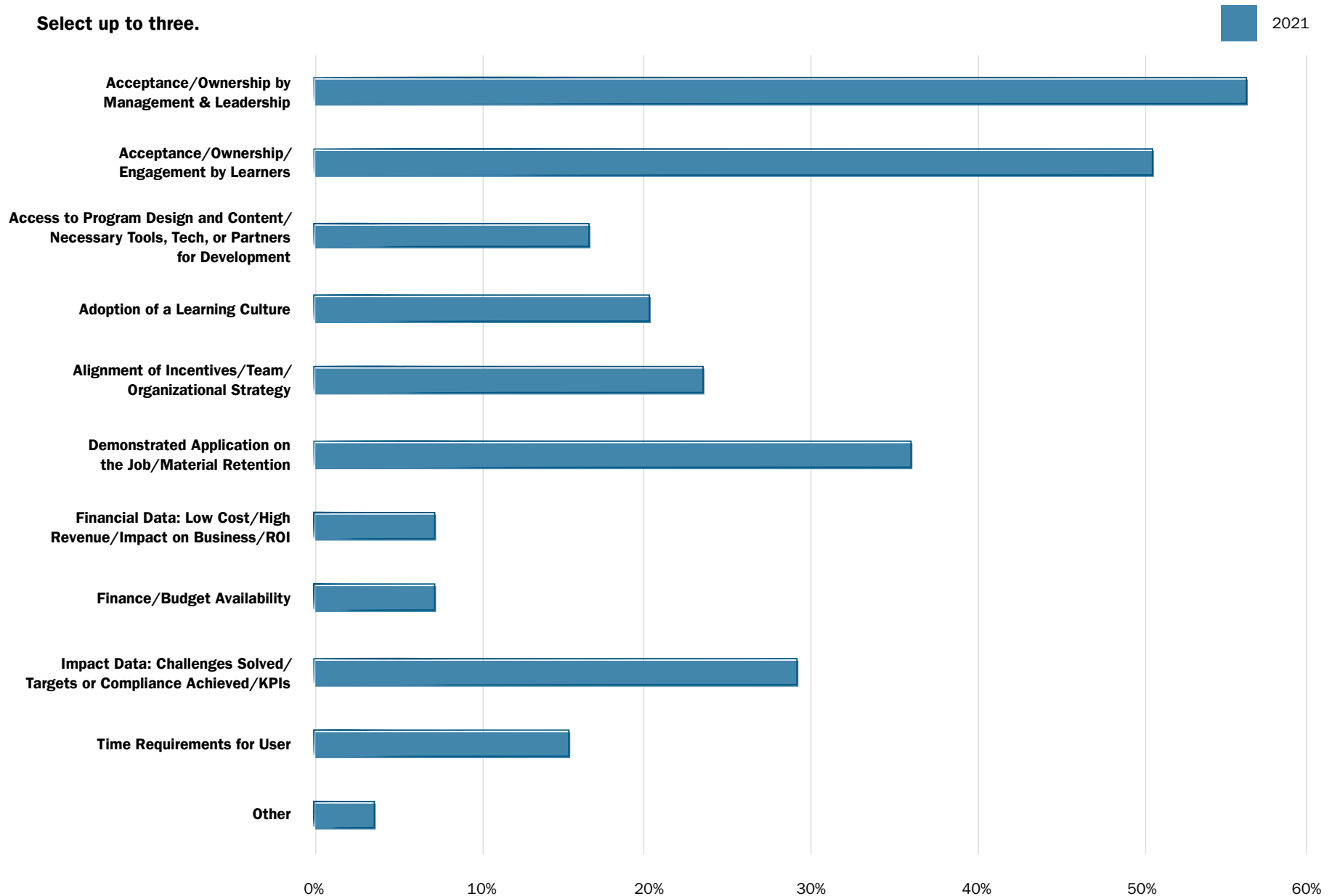


Q16: HOW SUCCESSFUL WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOUR 2020 LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE EFFORTS?



Q17 (NEW FOR 2021): WHAT ARE THE KEY FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WHETHER YOUR LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE EFFORTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NOT?

Select up to three.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



ZAC RYLAND

Performance Experience Designer

Zac is a Sr. Solutions Consultant on TiER1's learning team, where he creates solutions for our clients ranging from eLearning/ILT modules to mobile learning solutions. His knowledge draws upon experience in K-12 classrooms, along with his time leading and coaching teachers. Initially a member of the national Teach for America program, and most recently as a lead teacher in the Cincinnati Public School district, Zac has learned to combine data, content, and methodology to produce strong results. His journey has provided him with opportunities to develop minds in Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati while starting and managing programs and implementing curriculum design.

Since joining TiER1, Zac has worked on projects ranging from focuses on gamification to redesigning rituals and routines, leading clients from California to New York City on various initiatives. He has presented as a facilitator for Macy's and has built solutions for multiple clients including Delta, Aileron, P&G, Paycor, Vantiv, LensCrafters, E.W. Scripps, and more.



WALTER WARWICK

Principal Scientist

Walter has more than 15 years' experience developing computational models of cognition and human performance. He has a deep interest in understanding and improving the methods used by computational modelers to create, validate, and communicate the workings of their models.

Walter is at his best when he explores complex and ill-defined problems with his colleagues. He focuses his attention on problems that are best understood from a combination of different perspectives.

His research contributions include:

- **Wrong in the Right Way: Balancing Realism Against Other Constraints in Simulation-Based Training**
(Published in Adaptive Instructional Systems: First International Conference, AIS 2019)
- **No Representation without Integration! Better Cognitive Modeling through Interoperability**
(Published in AHFE 2018: Advances in Human Factors in Simulation and Modeling, pp 336-345)
- **An Integrated Model of Human Cyber Behavior**
(Published in the 780th issue of Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing)

WE ACTIVATE YOUR STRATEGIES THROUGH *people*

Strategy is only as valuable as the activation behind it: how it shows up, how work gets done, how your employees own it, and how your customers experience it.

HOW WE *activate* STRATEGY



Consult

Identify and align on performance factors needed for activation.

In addition to driving clarity around the desired future state, we partner to understand how the unique dynamics of your organization (culture, leadership, roles, systems, etc.) intersect and influence each other to create opportunities and overcome barriers for successful strategy activation.



Design

Create the performance experience and everything needed to sustain it.

We deliver the plan and detail needed for your people to be empowered and aligned around your strategy: outlining key training, communication, performance support tools, technology, and associated timelines in a clearly articulated blueprint, journey map, or experience design.



Build

Activate strategy through engaging, results-focused deliverables.

From custom technology to high-volume communication and training, our studio teams of instructional designers, software developers, designers, copywriters, and videographers create engaging deliverables that allow your people to have what they need when they need it—boom, strategy activated.

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS THAT *activate* STRATEGY

Every organization has different strategic priorities—and therefore different needs. We custom-craft the solution that is right for you.

SYSTEMS ADOPTION · DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION · EXPERIENCE DESIGN · CHANGE STRATEGY · ONBOARDING · SALES ENABLEMENT
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT · TALENT DEVELOPMENT · CUSTOM PORTALS · CULTURE · CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS



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Corporation

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