

The 2026 Learning Velocity™ Guide

7 Challenges Slowing Your Organization Down and How to Accelerate Through the Age of AI

Foreword

The companies I see winning right now aren't necessarily spending the most on technology or training. They're the ones who've figured out how to build new capabilities at the speed their business needs them. Speed certainly matters, but so does getting the right skills to the right people at the right time so that performance actually changes. This combination is what we mean by learning velocity™.

We work with organizations every day that are wrestling with these exact challenges. And honestly, the patterns are clear. The old playbook for workforce development just doesn't work anymore. By the time a traditional program launches, the skills have already changed. AI projects get stuck in endless pilots. People need knowledge that's sitting three systems away when they're trying to make a decision. This guide walks through seven challenges we keep seeing and, more importantly, what's actually working to solve them.

Here's what concerns me: the gap between learning teams and the business is rapidly getting wider. Some are becoming real strategic partners who drive growth. Others are stuck taking orders and managing budgets.

But here's what excites me: the organizations getting this right are building something fundamentally different. They're creating learning systems that move at the speed of business, unlock knowledge when people need it, and prove their impact on what truly matters. That's the future we're helping our clients build.

Which side of that divide are you on? And if you need to shift course, how fast can you move? This guide will help you figure that out. And when you're ready to talk through what it means for your organization, we're here.



Jean-Francois (JF) Vezina

Chief Executive Officer
GP Strategies Corporation

Introduction

By the end of 2026,
learning velocity™
will be the defining
competitive
advantage.

Organizations that can build capabilities faster than their competitors will seize opportunities others can't respond to quickly enough. AI will shift from a productivity tool to a performance teammate, actively coaching and enabling work in real time. And the learning function itself will split into two distinct camps: those that evolve into strategic performance enablers, and those that face consolidation and increasing cost-containment.

This guide identifies seven critical challenges slowing organizational velocity and the solutions that can help you accelerate past them.



7 Challenges Slowing Learning Velocity

Challenge 1

Workforce Skilling Can't Keep Pace with Business Change

Challenge 2

AI Adoption Is Individually Driven and Unstructured

Challenge 3

Critical Knowledge Exists but Isn't Accessible When Needed

Challenge 4

L&D Structures Are Designed More for Training Delivery Than Business Partnership

Challenge 5

Leaders Are Unprepared for AI-Era Complexity

Challenge 6

Work and Learning Remain Disconnected

Challenge 7

Learning Impact Is Difficult to Prove—and Harder to Improve



Challenge 1

Workforce Skilling Can't Keep Pace with Business Change

Velocity Blocker

Skills are going out of date faster than they can be refreshed. Automation and AI, shifting customer expectations, and regulatory change all move quicker than traditional programs can respond. When learning arrives late, execution slows and strategy stalls.

Solution

Accelerate capability building by minimizing the distance between awareness and productivity. Focus on targeted, role-based learning that prioritizes speed, relevance, and immediate application. Move from lengthy certification programs to modular skill-building that meets people where they work. Design learning that employees can immediately apply, creating momentum that compounds over time.



Dive into the transformative potential of enterprise skilling and discover how a [skills ontology](#) can illuminate hidden capabilities, inspire unexpected collaborations, and cultivate an agile, cross-functional workforce.



Challenge 2

AI Adoption Is Individually Driven and Unstructured

Velocity Blocker

AI investments exist (clearly), but organizations are struggling to move past personal productivity experiments toward enhancing performance at scale. Without intentional integration, AI often remains a collection of disconnected tools rather than a unified capability accelerator. This keeps AI stuck at the margins, where it is useful for individual efficiency but irrelevant to core business performance. Until AI is embedded into processes, roles, and decisions, it cannot function as a true capability multiplier.

Solution

Treat AI integration as an operating-model shift, not a tooling exercise. Begin by mapping tasks to find friction points and decision-flow gaps. Redesign processes so AI becomes part of how work gets done, not as something that sits on the surface. Use AI to personalize learning, accelerate skill transfer, and provide real-time guidance. Where simpler fixes like data access or integration work, apply those instead. The goal is to embed AI into workflows so it surfaces knowledge, recommends next steps, and coaches performance.



Learn about [GP Strategies' AI Maturity Model](#) and determine where your organization lands on the journey from experimentation to transformation.



Challenge 3

Critical Knowledge Exists but Isn't Accessible When Needed

Velocity Blocker

When knowledge is locked in systems, silos, or individual expertise, teams lose momentum and spend time relearning or redoing existing work. When people can't find answers quickly, velocity grinds to a halt. Time is lost not because the answers don't exist, but because they're inaccessible at the moment of need. As information becomes harder to surface, teams default to workarounds and rework, eroding both speed and confidence.

Solution

Unlock organizational knowledge with a robust data strategy. Start by breaking down silos and mapping where critical information lives. Then work to convert static content into dynamic, AI-enabled assets that are searchable and context-aware. A connected knowledge ecosystem ensures expertise flows freely across teams, reducing duplication and accelerating performance.



Explore how [GP helped Microsoft](#) turn expert knowledge into 50+ searchable, dynamic assets for moment-of-need access using AI-driven content tagging and modularization.



Challenge 4

L&D Structures Are Designed More for Training Delivery Than Business Partnership

Velocity Blocker

Traditional operating models can't respond quickly enough to shifting priorities. When L&D functions as an order-taker rather than a strategic partner, it limits learning's ability to drive continuous organizational momentum. In fact, our Measuring the Business Impact of Learning research revealed that in 2025, only 19% of L&D teams were viewed as strategic partners by their organizations. This reactive posture slows the entire enterprise, creating a cycle in which learning trails the business instead of being a lever for transformation.

Solution

Redesign L&D to accelerate the organization, not just serve it. Shift from reactive training delivery to proactive performance enablement. Align learning initiatives directly with business strategy through enterprise-wide collaboration with HR, operations, and leadership. Most importantly, rethink how success is measured by moving beyond metrics like hours spent learning or content volume. Instead, evaluate impact on productivity, capability growth, and business outcomes. When L&D is viewed (and measured) as a growth engine with clear targets tied to organizational performance, it changes the relationship with stakeholders and secures its role as a strategic partner.



The history of L&D as a peripheral function is evaporating. If we, as learning leaders, don't rise to the challenge, the value of the learning function will erode through aggressive cost-containment.”
– Matt Donovan, [The Future of the L&D Function: Does it Have Value?](#)



Challenge 5

Leaders Are Unprepared for AI-Era Complexity

Velocity Blocker

Without properly equipped leaders, organizational transformation stalls regardless of tools or strategies. Our research into leadership mindsets shows that fear—fear of failure, fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of taking risks—is a pervasive barrier for leaders, blocking the mindset shifts required for transformation. This default to protection rather than progression creates a fear-based hesitation that slows decision-making. This hesitation cascades through teams, resulting in organizational paralysis often disguised as caution.

Solution

Develop leaders who are grounded in wellbeing so they can stay steady, resourceful, and forward-looking. Focus on the four essential mindsets: growth, inclusive, agile, and enterprise, and translate them into everyday behaviors like faster decision-making, curiosity about AI, experimentation, and shared ownership. With these mindsets and strong psychological safety, leaders will combine emotional steadiness with intentional action, unlocking the confidence and adaptability needed to lead effectively in an AI-driven environment.



Our [leadership mindsets research](#) indicates that nearly one-third of leaders cite fear of failure as their top obstacle to adopting new ways of working.



Challenge 6

Work and Learning Remain Disconnected

Velocity Blocker

Learning happens outside the flow of work, slowing skill transfer and limiting sustained behavior change. When people must stop working to learn, adoption suffers, and the impact diminishes. Traditional compliance training—click through content, answer questions, earn a certificate—exemplifies this problem without ever addressing whether people can actually apply knowledge when facing real decisions.

Solution

Reimagine work as continuous learning. Move from episodic programs to adaptive learning systems that embed directly into workflows where decisions are made. Begin working toward atomic instructional design—modular, reusable learning components that can be rapidly assembled and personalized for individual needs. This approach gives learners agency to determine their own pathways while ensuring support surfaces exactly when they need it.



AI allows L&D teams to develop layered, experiential ecosystems that can evolve with the learner's moment of need. [Atomic instructional design](#) is the future of learning.



Challenge 7

Learning Impact Is Difficult to Prove—and Harder to Improve

Velocity Blocker

Measurement often focuses on activity metrics rather than outcomes. Without clear evidence of impact, it's impossible to demonstrate value, secure investment, or guide meaningful transformation. Our research also reveals a measurement paradox: 98% of learning leaders want to measure impact, yet only 24% have budgets allocated for it.

As a result, learning efforts risk being dismissed as cost centers rather than strategic enablers. Skepticism grows, funding erodes, and transformation efforts lose momentum when impact is unclear.

Solution

Prove impact by measuring what truly matters: learning velocity itself. Move beyond metrics that reward activity, like hours spent learning or content volume, instead of performance. Sometimes the solution is leaner than the business expects (like an elegant nudge series instead of a program overhaul). Start by listening to the business first. Clarify the challenges they're trying to overcome, not what training to create, and then build incremental measurement capability rather than attempting comprehensive frameworks immediately.



According to our [Measuring the Business Impact of Learning](#) report, **only 1 in 4** organizations allocate specific budgets for measurement even though 3 in 4 organizations recognize the importance of doing so.



Building Velocity for the AI Era

The future belongs to learning organizations that move faster than the pace of change itself.

The organizations that will lead through 2026 and beyond aren't waiting for perfect conditions or complete clarity. They're building learning velocity now by accelerating capability development, unlocking knowledge, and positioning learning as a strategic lever for competitive advantage.

The path forward requires simultaneous progress on two tracks: delivering operational excellence today while building the foundations for transformation tomorrow. This means embedding AI into current workflows while reimagining what the learning organization can become. It means proving value in the near term while investing in the structures, capabilities, cultures, and mindsets needed for long-term success.

Your learning organization will face these challenges if it's not already.

Are you ready to accelerate your learning velocity™? [Connect with our experts](#) to explore how your organization can navigate these challenges and build momentum for transformation.

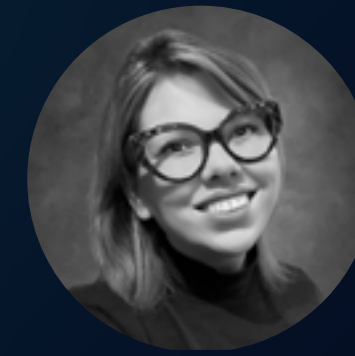
About the Contributors



Matt Donovan

Chief Learning and Innovation Officer
GP Strategies

Matt Donovan, Chief Learning and Innovation Officer for GP Strategies, is a recognized name in learning, bringing 25+ years of crafting learner-centric solutions and leading high-impact teams. He has a background in instructional design and leads workshops, speaks at global events, and has won industry awards, including being named one of Training magazine's Top 10 International Trainers under 40.



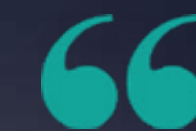
Nic Girvan

Senior Director, Leadership & Inclusion
GP Strategies

Nic Girvan brings nearly 25 years of global experience building inclusive cultures and future-ready leaders through bold, tech-enhanced learning that drives measurable impact. Drawing on deep expertise in adult learning theory and psychology, she's pioneered award-winning solutions like GP Strategies' flagship inclusion escape rooms and in-the-work behavioral nudge strategy. A sought-after speaker and thought leader, her mission is clear: help organizations unlock potential, foster belonging, and achieve sustainable success.



The learning organizations that will thrive in 2026 won't be the ones with the biggest budgets or the most polished programs. They'll be the ones to build capabilities as fast as the business needs them."



In 2026, the real test will be whether L&D can help people grow beyond what their AI can automate. If L&D isn't teaching people how to think, create, decide, and innovate beyond what their AI can automate, it risks becoming obsolete."

About the Contributors



Cheryl Jackson, PhD

Director, Organizational Design & Change Management
GP Strategies

For 20 years, Dr. Cheryl Jackson has been driving transformational change in Fortune 500 organizations across retail, manufacturing, healthcare, and food and beverage. With a doctorate in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, she combines scientific methodology with practical expertise to create solutions that help organizations and employees thrive. At GP Strategies, Cheryl leads the OD and Change Management practice, developing innovative offerings and supporting client initiatives. She remains actively engaged through whitepapers, conferences, podcasts, and as a lecturer in the Master of I/O program at Texas A&M University.



While AI is accelerating the pace of change, it is simply the latest chapter in a 20-year trajectory of rapid, technology-driven transformation. As change continues to increasingly outpace stability, companies must build change readiness and resilience, human capabilities no algorithm can automate.”



Ella Richardson

Senior Director, Consulting
GP Strategies

Ella Richardson is the Senior Director of Consulting at GP Strategies. She helps organizations move beyond surface-level solutions to create cultures where learning becomes a force for progress. Her approach is rooted in organizational psychology and behavioral science, blending evidence-based practice with creativity to shift mindsets, embed new habits, and build capability at scale. Ella partners with leaders to tackle the big questions: How do we prepare people for the future of work? How do we make learning matter? How do we turn strategy into lived experience?



This year, the learning organizations that matter will lead from the front, running on two synchronized tracks: operational excellence that accelerates today’s work and transformation that rebuilds capability for tomorrow. AI becomes inseparable from the workflow while we redesign the architecture of capability itself—so L&D stops trailing the enterprise and starts pulling it decisively forward.”

About GP Strategies

GP Strategies helps organizations amplify their people's potential at the speed of opportunity. In a world where skills evolve in months and strategies shift faster than traditional training cycles, we enable continuous learning that keeps pace with continuous change. For nearly 60 years, we've combined proven learning methodology with cutting-edge AI—including our proprietary **GP AIQ+™** platform—to deliver speed that matches market pace, relevance to your business context, and quality that drives performance.

We're the partner
that people leaders
trust when learning
velocity™ matters.

Learn more at:

gpstrategies.com | info@gpstrategies.com

