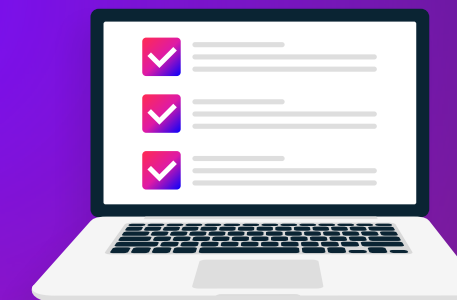




Why your biggest L&D problems will only be fixed with integration



L&D in 2026: a research report

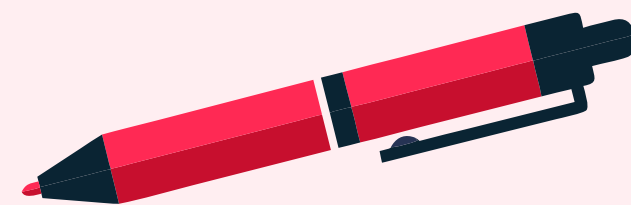
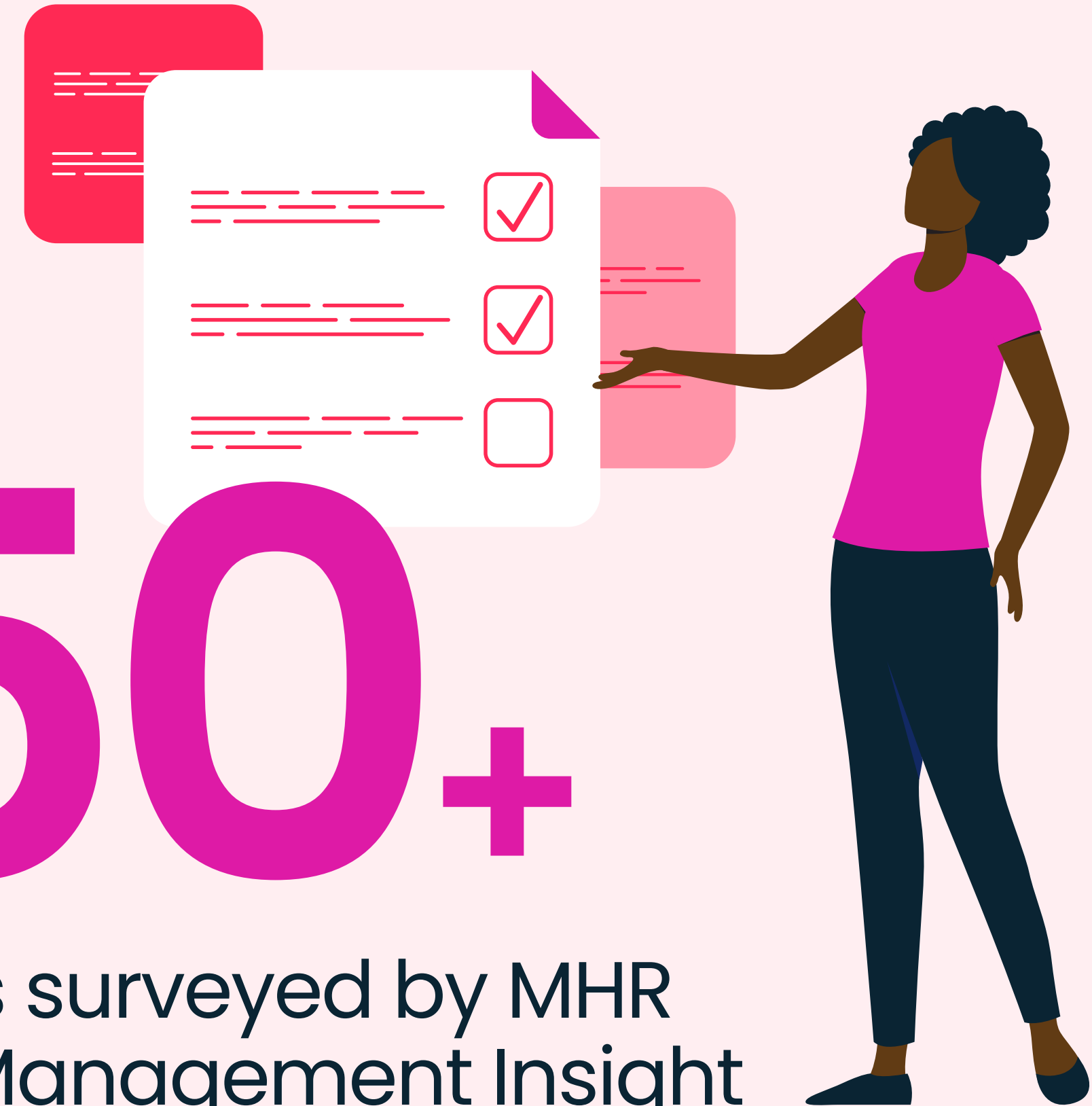
Executive summary

In collaboration with MHR, People Management Insight surveyed 250+ HR and L&D professionals to find out the challenges they're facing, and where the opportunities are for organisational learning in 2026. There's a common assumption that L&D's biggest barriers are weak content and lack of employee engagement, but the survey data tells a different story, revealing a clear misalignment at the heart of most L&D strategies.

Even though **94%** of leaders agree that learning drives performance, **52%** are not closely involved with L&D. Nearly half of organisations don't allocate any formal time for employees to dedicate to upskilling, almost a quarter (**21%**) don't report on the impact of L&D on organisational performance, and **27%** don't even know how much they invest in L&D per year.

It's clear that while no one denies the value of L&D, many struggle to secure buy-in from senior leadership or prove learning's impact on overall organisational performance. **This report reveals what's stopping L&D professionals from achieving their full potential and provides a clear roadmap for developing learning strategies that upskill and engage employees.**

250+
professionals surveyed by MHR
and People Management Insight



Read more



A deeper dive into the findings

L&D is a clear priority, but proving its impact is easier said than done

94%

agree L&D impacts organisational performance

21%

don't report on the impact of L&D

- L&D teams need better evidence chains and reporting capabilities in their learning systems to prove their impact on overall organisational performance.

L&D's biggest priorities in 2026

Compliance & mandatory training	66%
Leadership development	65%
Role/industry-specific skills	50%
Personal & career development	25%
Digital & technology skills	25%
Wellbeing & resilience	13%
Equality, diversity & inclusion	11%

- Despite a lot of noise in the market about upskilling employees with AI, digital and technology skills are not the priority for L&D teams – compliance and mandatory training are.

The biggest barriers to effective L&D

Limited employee time/capacity	70%
Budget constraints	57%
Lack of senior leadership buy-in	28%
Poor engagement with learning	26%
Difficulty demonstrating ROI	24%
Fragmented systems/technology	23%
Skills shortages within L&D	13%

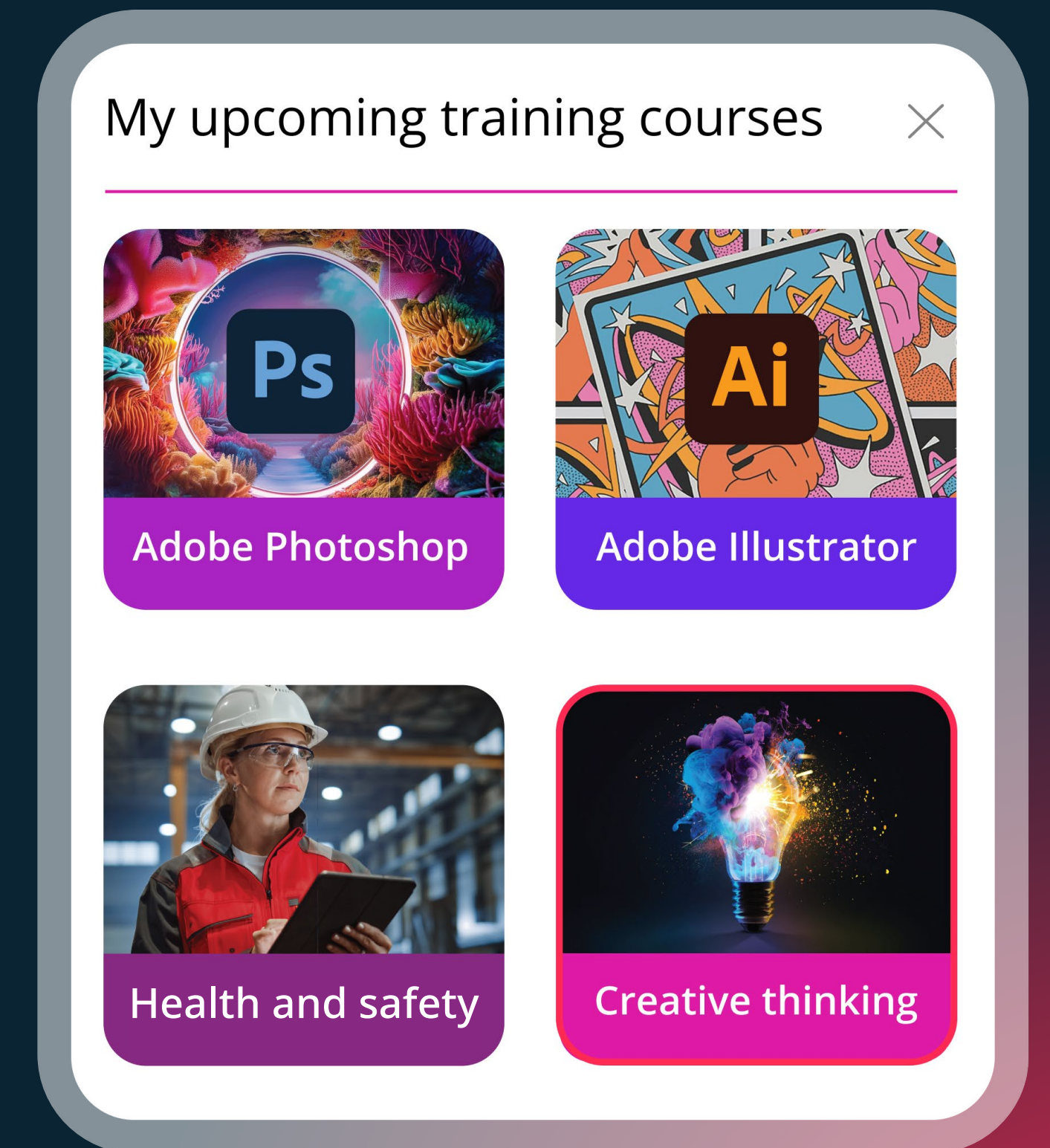
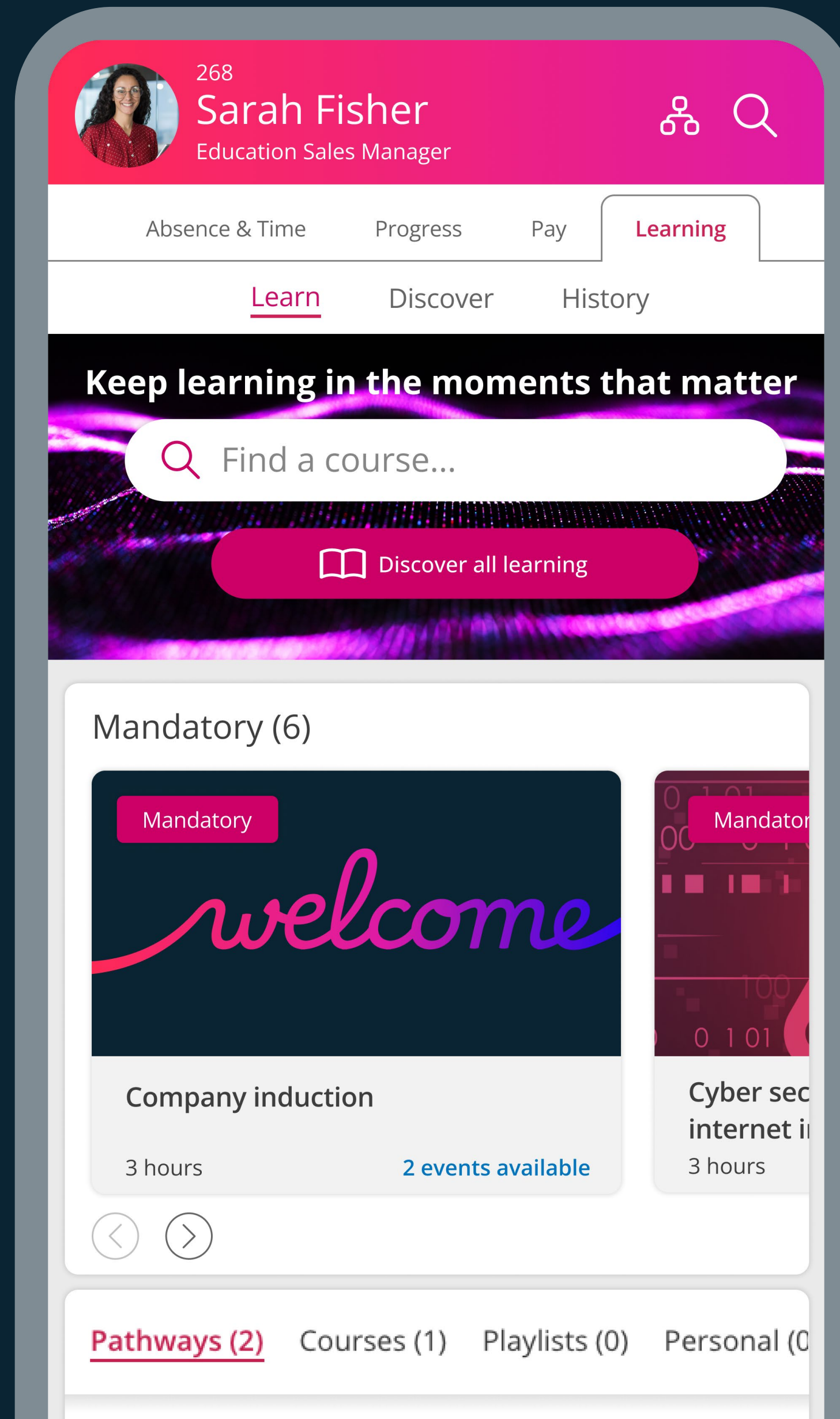
- Even the best learning content won't land unless employees are given adequate time to dedicate to it, so it's no wonder that lack of capacity is cited as the biggest barrier to L&D. One solution is introducing bite-sized learning that employees can slot into a busy working day without significantly disrupting their flow of work.

Streamline training with
People First Learning

People First has an
extensive library of

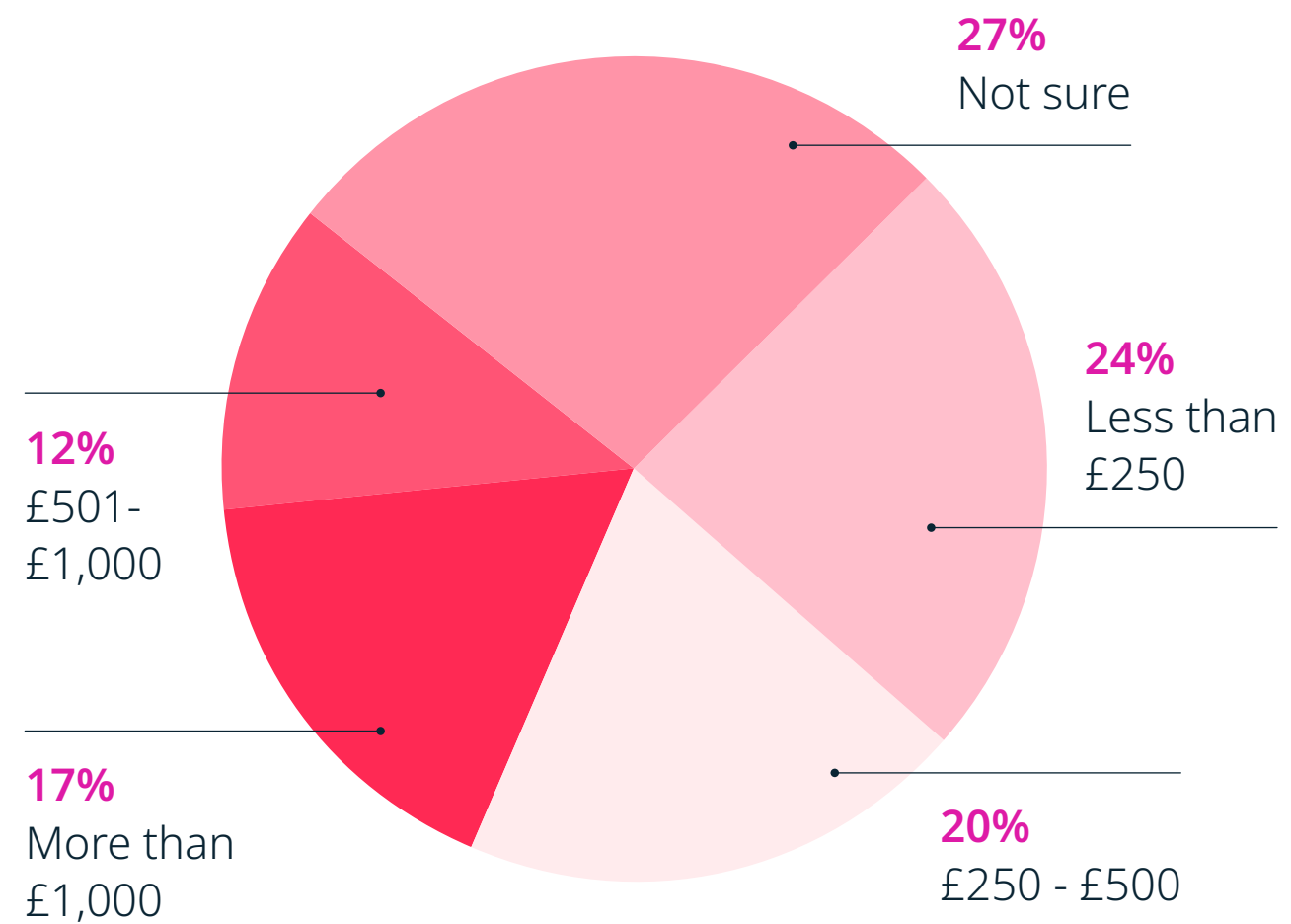
90,000

bite-sized courses that engage
employees and empower them to
take charge of their own development
at a pace that suits them.



The cost of L&D

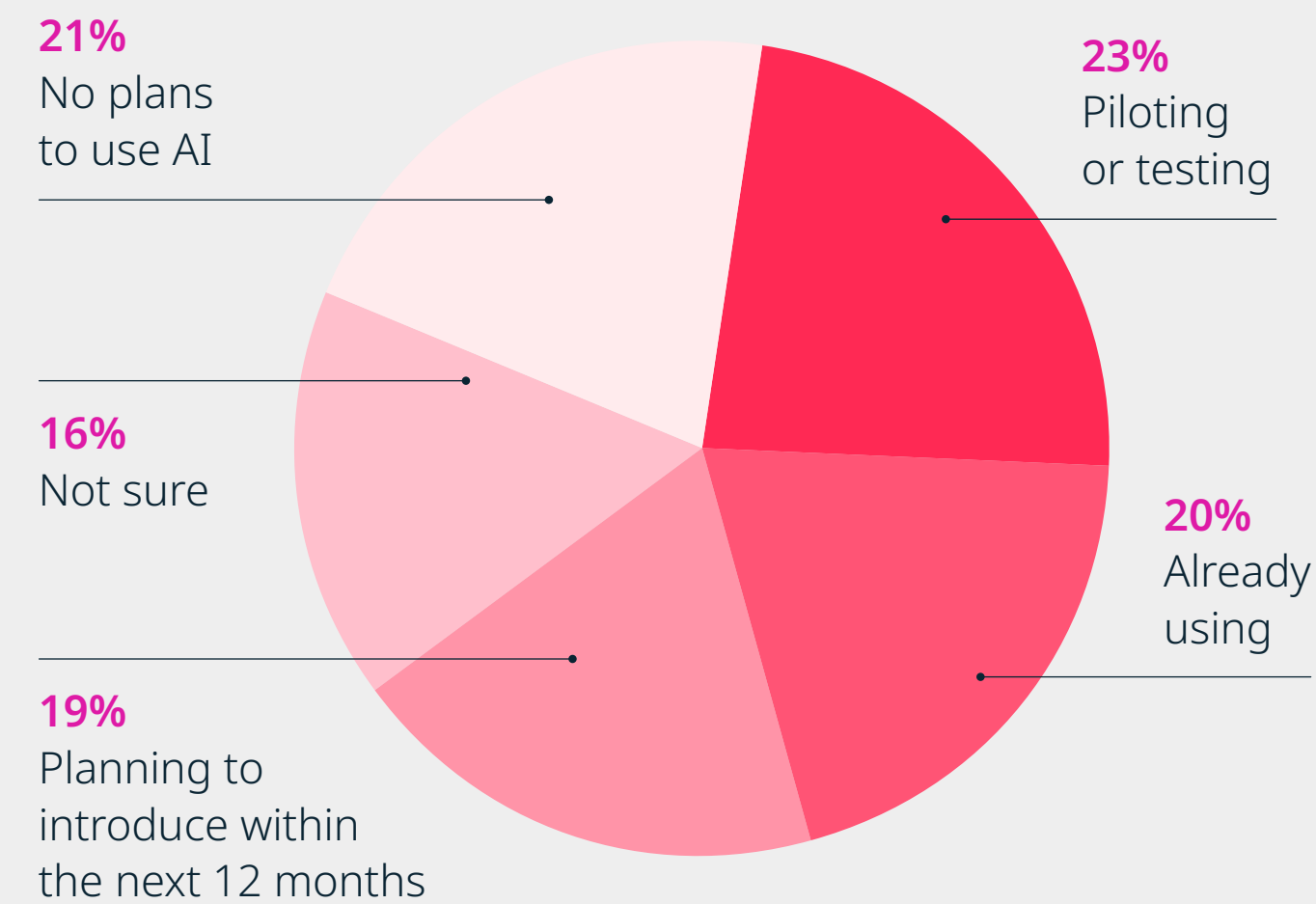
How much does your organisation invest in L&D per year per employee?



➤ The majority being unsure suggests that many organisations don't or can't track spend tightly, or it's split across different teams or systems, making it harder to quantify.

AI adoption in L&D

How much is your organisation planning to implement AI?

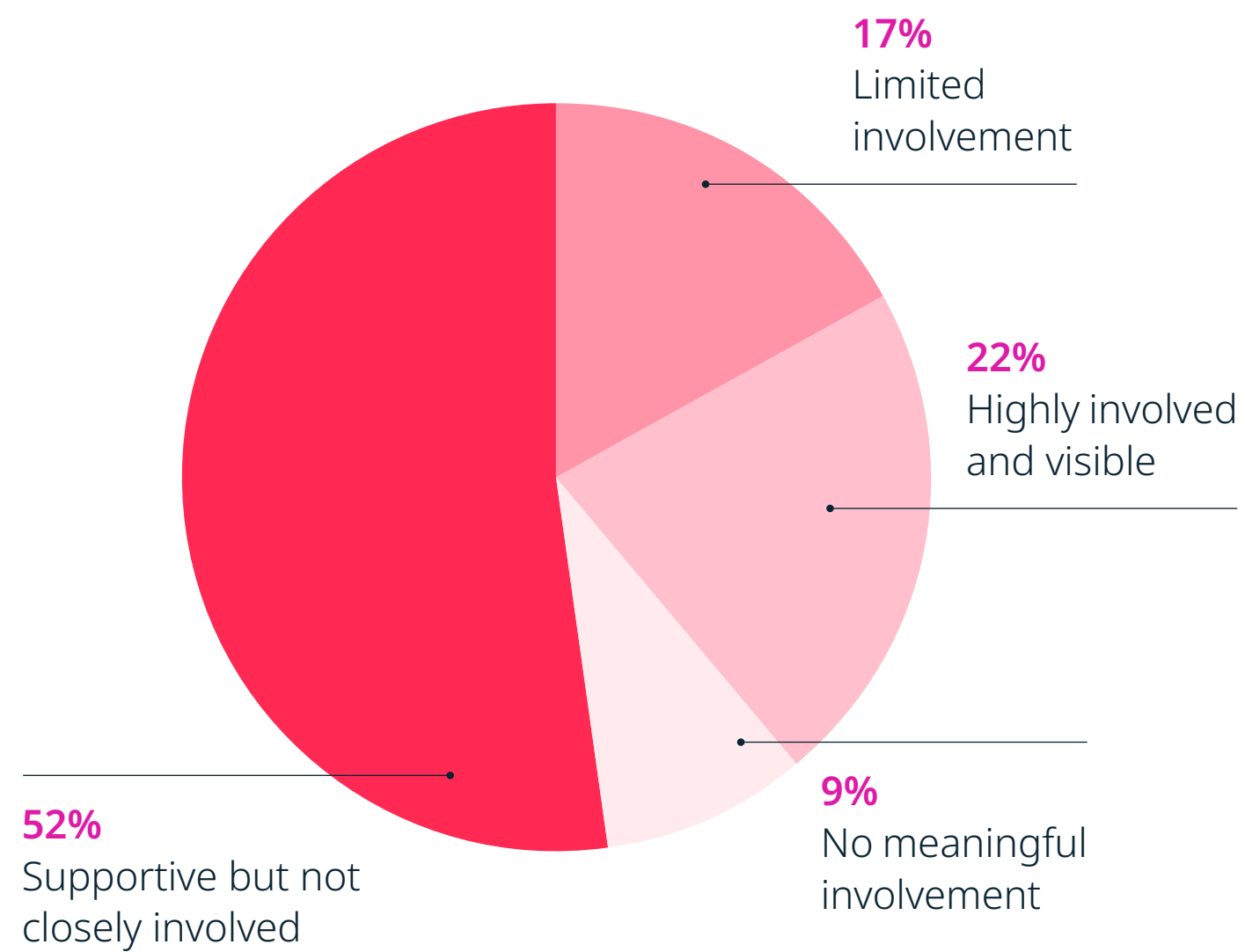


➤ AI adoption is accelerating, but there's still some hesitation (**37%**), suggesting that L&D teams need a clear roadmap to guide them forward.

37%
have hesitation with adopting AI in L&D

Leadership is supportive of L&D, but only at arm's length

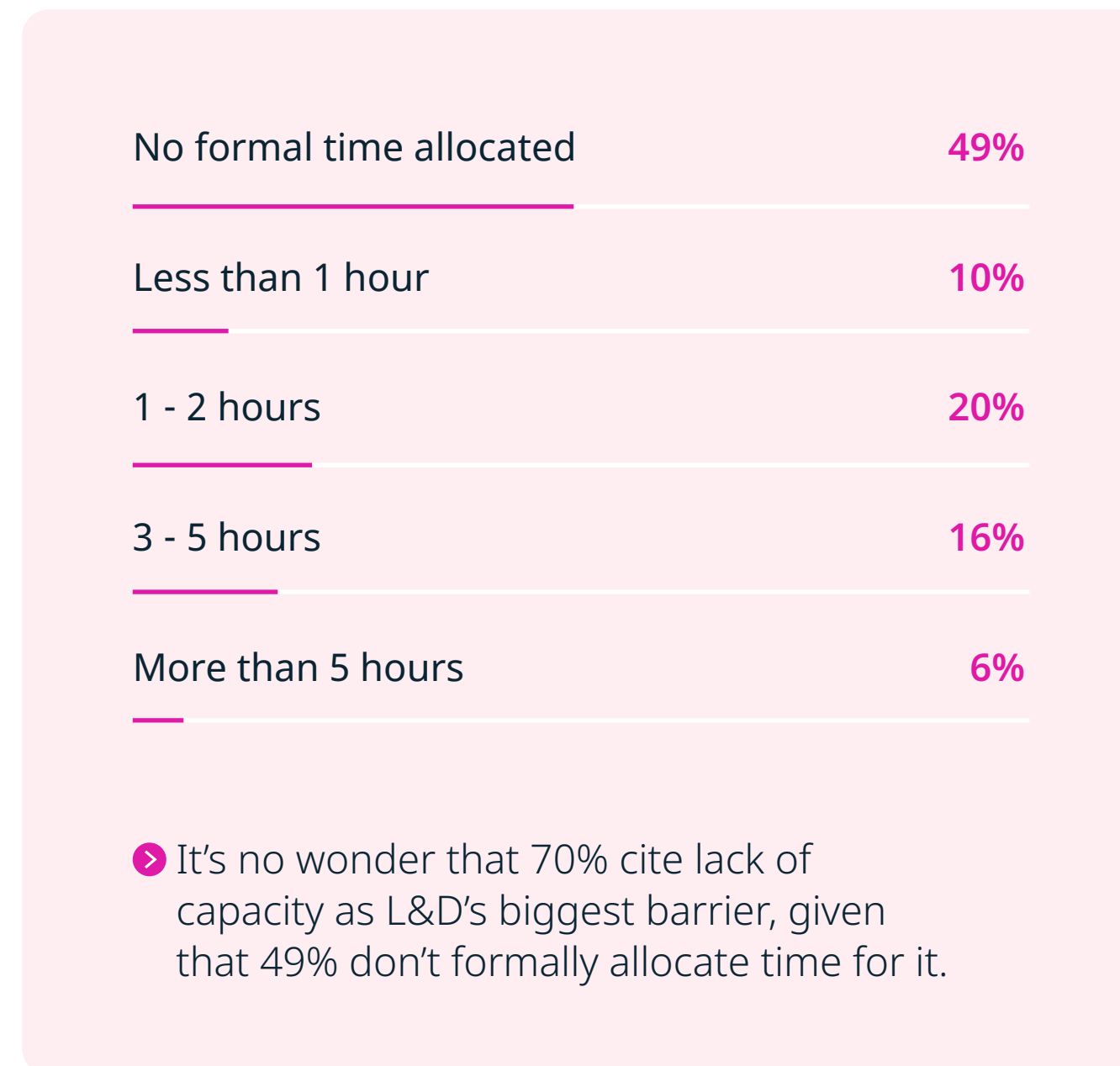
How involved is senior leadership in L&D?



➤ Only **1 in 5** leaders being highly involved in promoting or shaping L&D limits the pace of change and adoption. There's a clear need for a top-down approach where senior management lead by example.

Time for learning isn't formally allocated

How much time are employees encouraged to spend on L&D each month?



1 in 5

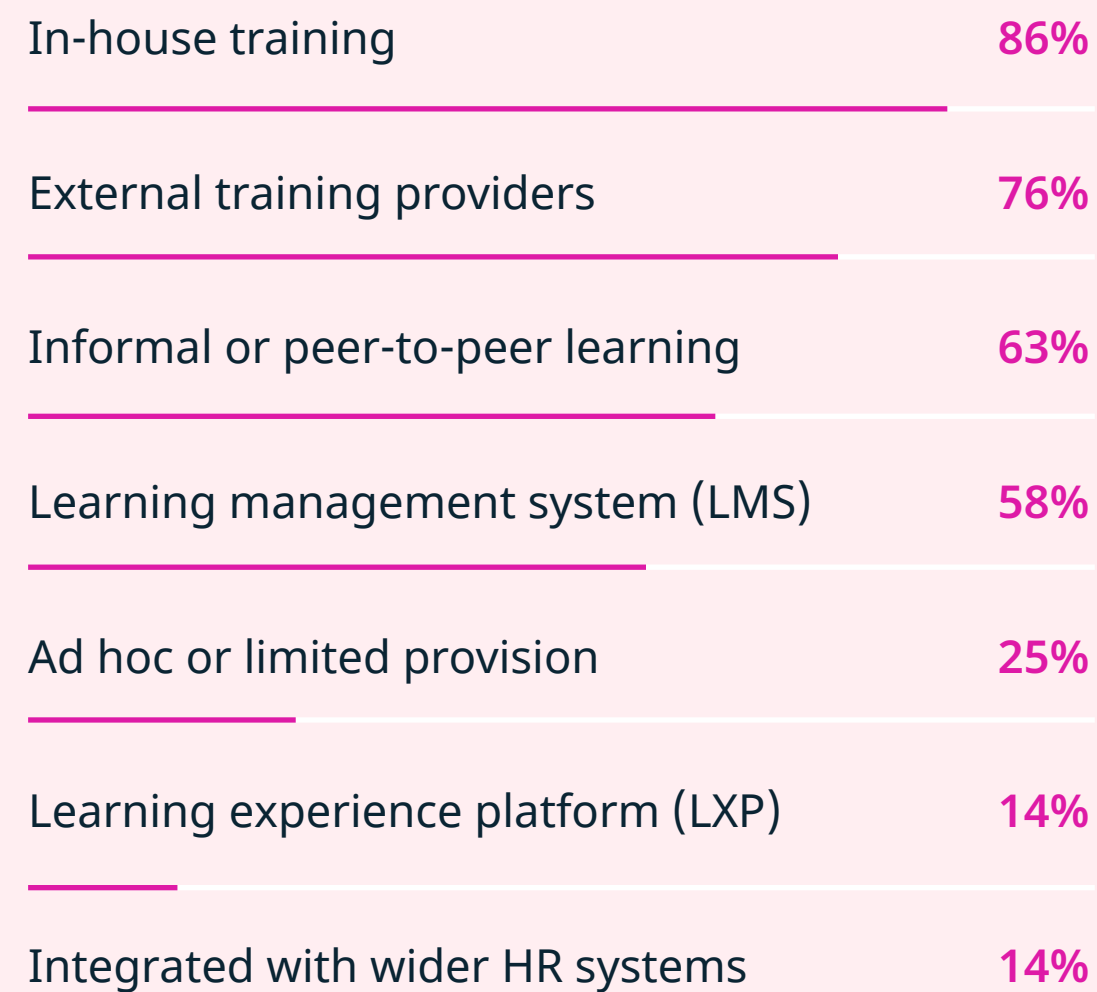
leaders are highly involved in promoting or shaping L&D limits

49%

don't formally allocate time for L&D

L&D delivery

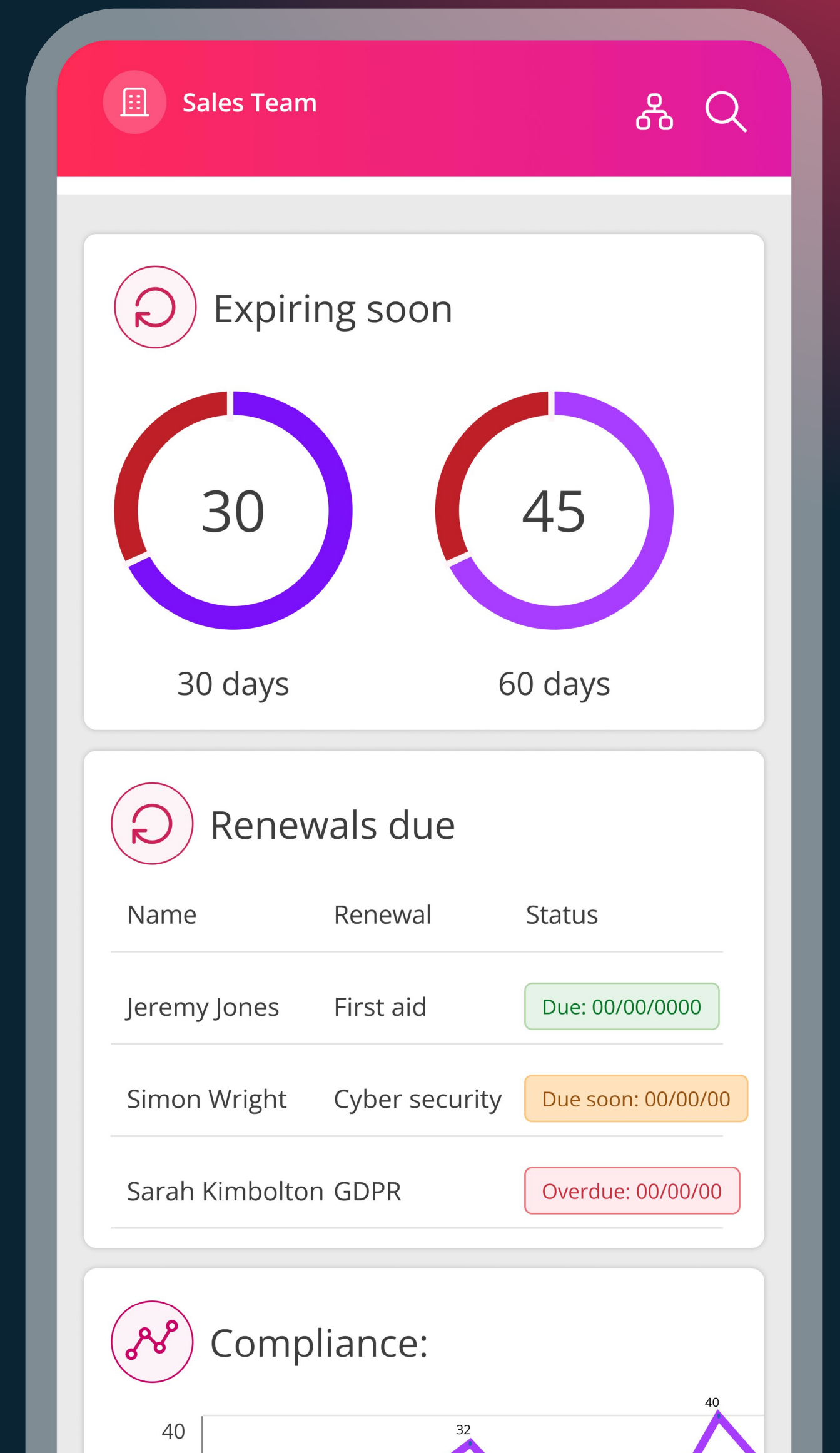
How is L&D delivered in your organisation?



- ▶ L&D delivery is still scattered across various channels, making it harder to track completion and measure outcomes.

Reports you can rely on

People First Learning provides one hub for all L&D needs, whether that's reporting on completion of bite-sized learning modules or tracking attendance for in-person training events. With all your learning data in one platform, you'll never struggle to piece together disparate data again.



HR and L&D working hand in hand

Are HR and L&D separate teams, or integrated?

68%

integrated teams

32%

separate teams



▶ When L&D is separate to HR, teams operate in siloes, leading to disconnected data and misaligned ways of working.

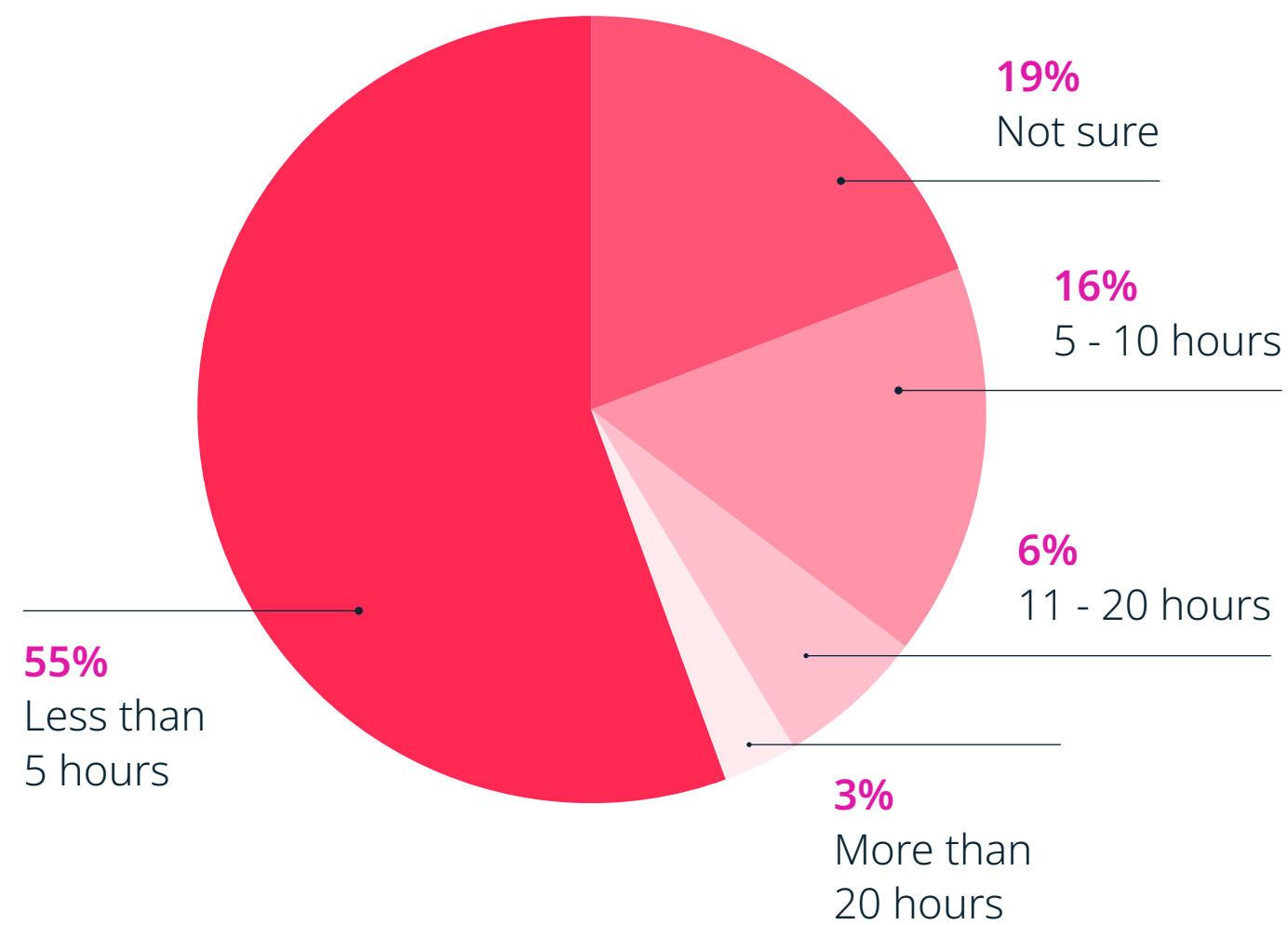
What are the main benefits of L&D?

Improved performance/productivity	60%
Improved employee engagement	56%
More effective managers	41%
Future skills readiness	35%
Better retention	35%
Improved organisational culture	30%
Stronger internal progression	27%

▶ L&D is a key driver for both organisational performance and employee engagement.

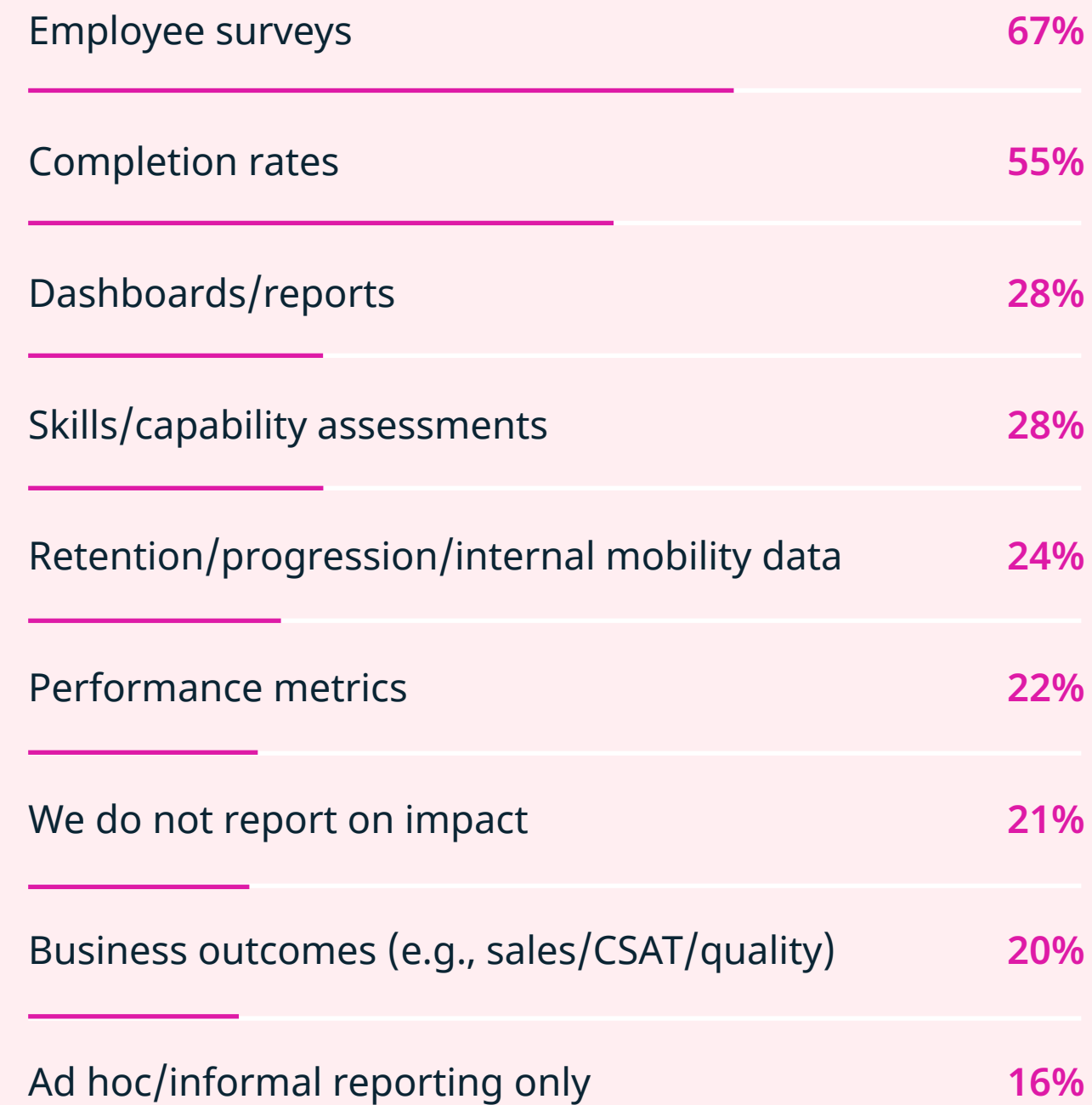
Reporting is sporadic or irregular

How much time do you spend on L&D reporting each month?



➤ The figures suggest that L&D reporting is either minimal, informal or not really a structured process.

How do you report on the impact of L&D?

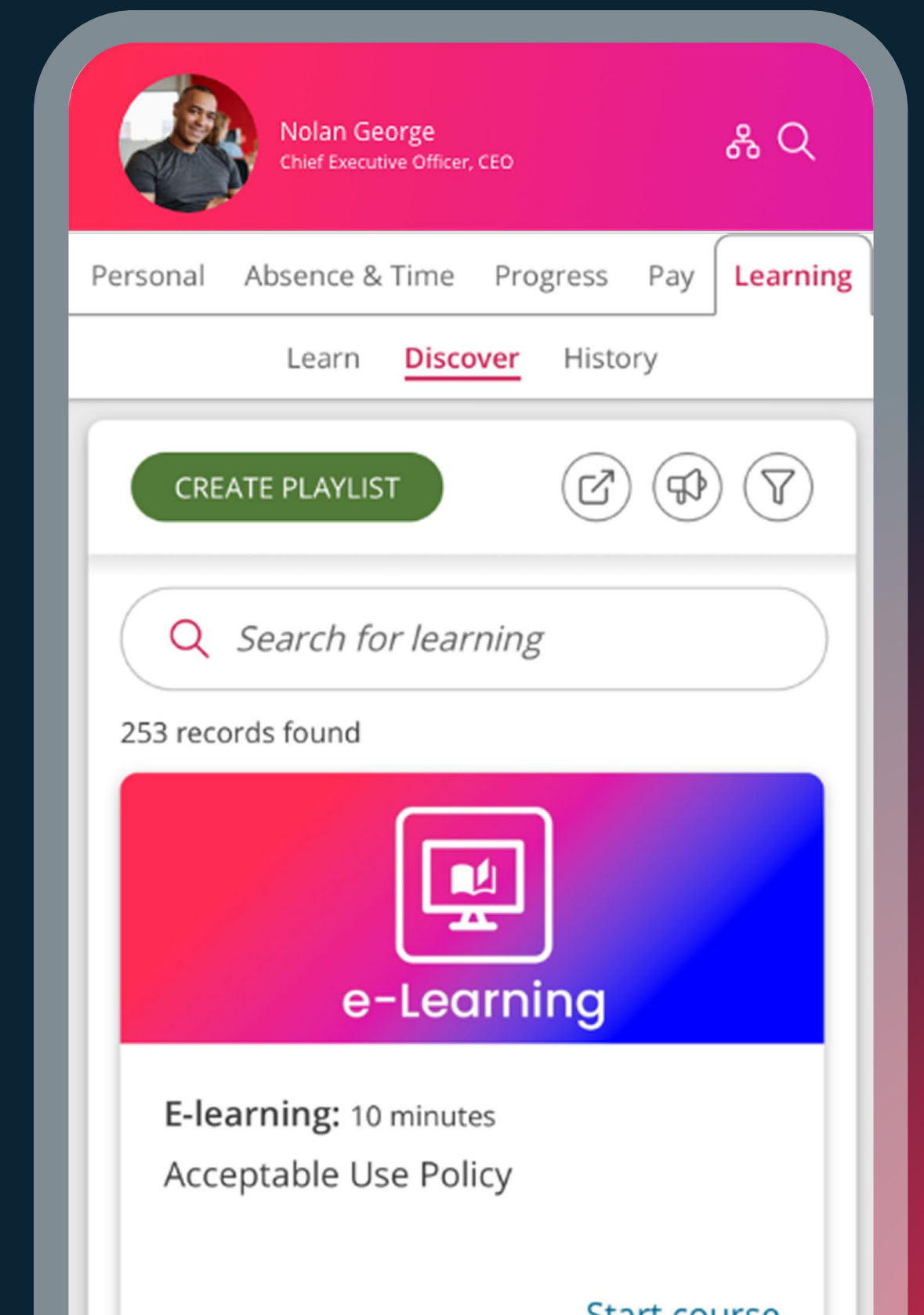
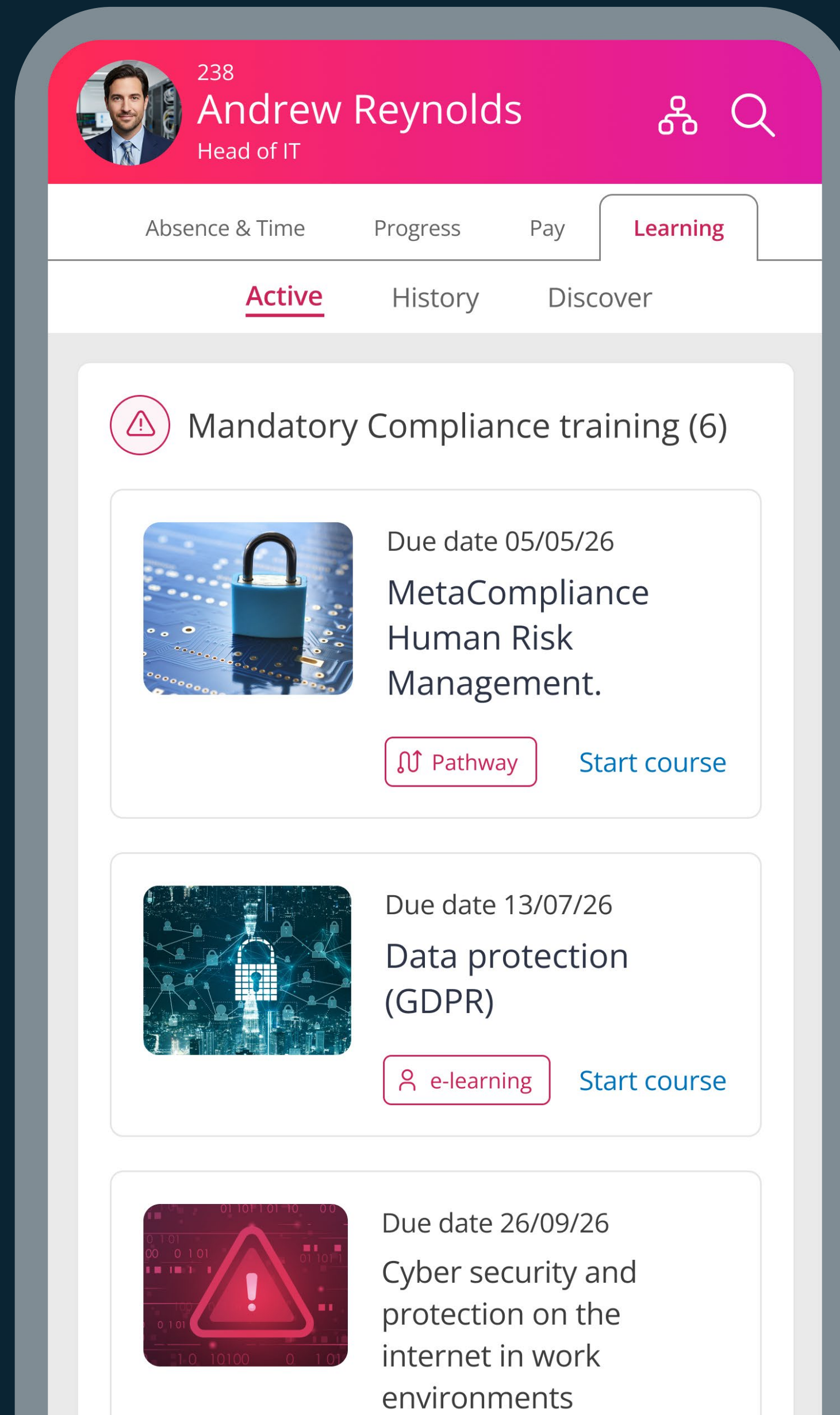


➤ Worryingly, nearly a quarter don't report on impact at all, either due to limited time or because their learning systems don't have robust reporting capabilities.

The platform behind a high-performing team

People First integrates learning and HR in one secure platform.

Conduct employee surveys, report on course completion rate, build custom dashboards, and view retention and progression metrics in one place. With People First, employee learning metrics are directly tied to organisational performance without the need to manually collate data from separate HR and learning systems.



Where fragmented systems are causing friction

More than a quarter (**23%**) of L&D professionals cite fragmented systems as their biggest barrier, and nearly a third (**32%**) work in separate teams to HR. Together, these findings point to a lack of alignment between learning and people data.



23%

cite fragmented systems as their biggest barrier

It's clear that siloed ways of working and systems that don't integrate are stopping L&D strategies from achieving their full potential, and time constraints, inconsistent adoption, lack of employee engagement and limited reporting capabilities add another layer of difficulty.

Integration as the next step

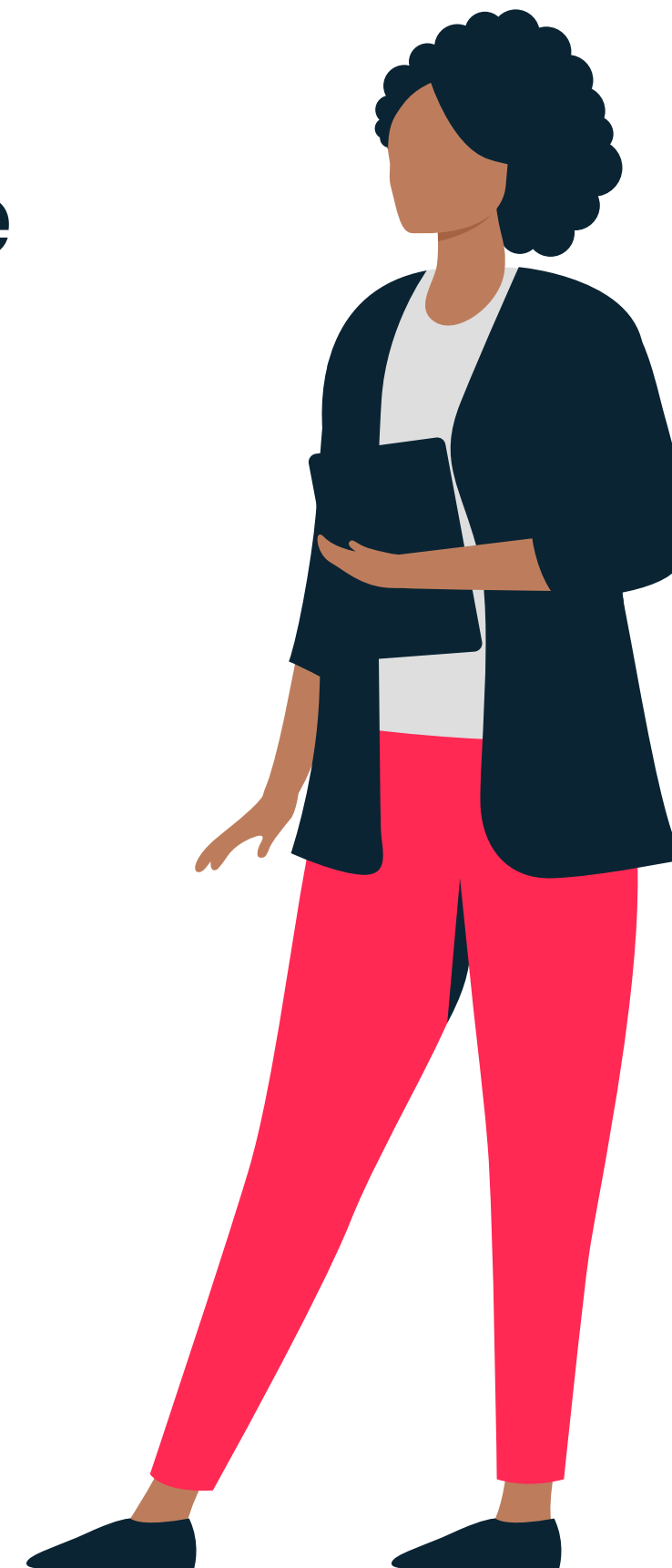
With a learning platform that integrates with your core HR system, it becomes much easier to:

- ▶ Report by job title, department, level, tenure, or location
- ▶ Link learning to performance cycles, promotions or retention trends
- ▶ Go beyond tracking learning activity metrics and prove how learning impacts strategic business outcomes

People First Learning

From compliance training to upskilling and development opportunities, our learning platform integrates fully with People First HR to create one complete picture of your workforce.

- ▶ Access a diverse content library and curate the selection for each employee or department with tailored playlists and pathways
- ▶ Connect learning and development with employee check-ins, goals and progression plans
- ▶ Drill down into the numbers with detailed reports and real-time analytics



Don't just take our word for it...



"The rate at which People First Learning is continuing to develop and refine is fantastic. It really drives engagement. I've never seen such good uptake on learning modules."

Gemma Hathway, HR Director



"The learning platform on People First has been a massive benefit for our L&D team and for our employees themselves."

Neil Jackson, Learning and Development Manager

people first
powered by MHR

Explore People First