

A woman with long, wavy red hair is shown in profile, looking towards another woman whose dark hair is visible on the right side of the frame. They appear to be in a professional setting, possibly a meeting or a collaborative work environment. The background is softly blurred, showing office lights and a brick wall. The overall tone is professional and focused.

blue eskimo

**Are we entering a new era for
contracting in Learning and
Development?**

Two vertical bars are located in the bottom right corner of the image. The top bar is a vibrant pink color, and the bottom bar is a light grey color. They are positioned to the right of the main text area.

Contracting and collaboration: The new L&D paradigm?

After more than two years of living through a pandemic, we now have time to take stock of all the ways our world has changed, particularly in the workplace.

Necessity is the mother of invention, but while we haven't necessarily invented new ways of working, the pandemic has clearly accelerated the pace of change that was already happening in automation and technology, and these changes have been especially marked in the Learning and Development sector.

The technology for remote working and global collaboration has existed for years, but the pandemic was the catalyst that made it mainstream. It is now the primary way that L&D is delivered, and there will be no going back.

This means that demand for job roles connected to the Learning and Development sector has increased, although now plateauing. We have seen a sharp rise across all roles, but especially for:

- Learning Experience Design (LXD)
- Project and Programme Management
- LMS/LXP Implementation Skills
- Learning Delivery, and
- Learning Consultancy.



The shift



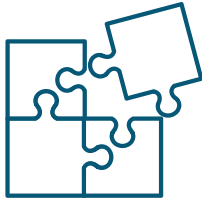
So what has changed?

Over the last decade, we have witnessed a profound shift in the working cultures of the companies we partner with, and the pandemic has supercharged this new working model. The standard “top down” hierarchical approach is being replaced by a more efficient and flexible model of dynamic teams (Bennett, 2022).

The dynamic teams model means that people are working in customer-, product- or mission-focused teams led by team leaders who are experts in their domain rather than professional managers (Miller, et al, 2016).

The rise of digitisation within the Learning and Development industry, combined with the shift within organisations towards adopting a dynamic teams model, means both contracting work and contractors are in higher demand than ever before.





Where Learning and Development projects have a need for specialised skills that companies don't have internally, contractors are being bought in to fill those skills gaps.



For companies in Learning and Development, the shift towards dynamic teams leads to more internal staff mobility, with employees moving between projects like contractors, either on a permanent or fixed-term basis.



Project managers and team leaders are now more responsible for sourcing the resources needed for their projects, including identifying and hiring talent and contractors.



We are increasingly hiring out entire "SWAT" teams of contractors to work on specific projects for companies as their learning and development becomes fully digital.

For employees, the rise of dynamic working, both in-office and remote, means that work has become more untethered from time and location. People now have increased flexibility to work from any location and to manage their own time, provided the work gets done.

This doesn't mean less work; it just offers more flexibility for employees and gives them greater control over their time.



43.9% of respondents in our 2021 L&D survey said that they were working longer hours more regularly because of remote work. Despite this, 93% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that remote working has been a success.



At Blue Eskimo, along with a rising demand for contractors, we're observing not so much a "Great Resignation" (Power, 2022) as a "Post-pandemic Switch."

We have seen some of our long-time contractors moving into permanent roles and specialists now turning to contracting for the first time. People who have been contracting for years have decided that they want the security of permanent employment or have been impacted by the legislation around IR35 – see more about this here:

<https://www.blueeskimo.com/resources/videos/flexible-resourcing>

Additionally, individuals who previously wouldn't have considered contracting have flourished in more flexible working environments and are now making the transition to contracting, a group we refer to as "PPCNs" (Post-pandemic Contracting Newbies).

The answer to whether we are entering a new era for contracting in Learning and Development is a resounding yes. In fact, we are not just entering this era; we are already firmly in it.

What does this mean for companies?



Employee Benefits

Employee benefits should align with the priorities and perks that matter to staff, influencing their decision to stay or leave. For example, parental leave and childcare options are more important for working parents than beer and pizza nights. In our 2021 L&D survey, 8.4% of respondents cited better benefits packages as their main reason for considering a job change (Blue Eskimo, 2021).



Company progression

There needs to be good opportunity for development and progression. 15% of respondents in our L&D survey said that improved career prospects would be their primary reason for changing jobs whilst a further 19.9% said seeking a more interesting and challenging role would be their primary motivation for changing jobs (Blue Eskimo, 2021).



Retaining Talent

Companies will have to work even harder to attract and retain the best talent whether people are employed directly or contracted, and this means that now is also the perfect time for companies to review their structure and policies.



Shared Purpose

Building a shared sense of purpose and community culture across diverse teams, working locations and a mix of employees and contractors is more important than ever before.



Effective Leadership

You need the right leaders to manage these diverse teams that are often working remotely and across multiple locations.



Equal Treatment

Contractors are part of the team and should be treated the same.

What does this mean for companies?



For companies dedicated to making their staff, including contractors and employees, feel engaged and part of a community with chances to progress, there is an opportunity to attract top talent from other organisations. Conversely, those that resist change face the "Great Resignation," where employees seeking flexible work are encountering an unprecedented number of options and are ready to seize them.

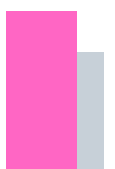
Our research has shown that even people who are happy in their current role would consider leaving.



In our survey, 47% of respondents said they would consider leaving their employer in the next 12 months, despite 85% of our sample group saying they were quite, or very, happy in their current position (Blue Eskimo, 2021).

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If you are hiring for L&D, you need to know that the market is much more competitive today. To attract the best talent, you will have to go way beyond remuneration and look at your whole working policy.



What does this new era of contracting mean for employees?



If you work in the Learning and Development sector, the pandemic will have impacted the way you work and caused you to consider how you work in the future. Whether you are a seasoned contractor, a recent convert or even someone who has switched from contracting to employment, the chances are that you will be “working like a contractor”: working flexibly, often remotely, in a dynamic team and moving from project to project - and the good news for you is that there are more opportunities for career and advancement than ever before!

Blue Eskimo are the Learning & Performance Institute's only recruitment partner with over 19 years of experience connecting the most talented people with the best learning roles.

Contact us to discuss any aspect of contracting.



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