

Measuring Learning Impact: How To Evaluate Outcomes Before You Buy



Companies **invest \$400 billion in corporate learning** every year, but **just 4% to 8% measure the ROI or impact** of their programs. Most L&D teams can report on completions and satisfaction scores, but not on whether training changed behavior, closed skill gaps, or contributed to a business goal. That gap becomes expensive at the exact moment it matters most: when you're evaluating a new platform and need evidence for what it will actually change.

This framework gives you four questions to answer before you sit down with a vendor, plus the proof points to look for when conversations begin.

Where Are You Starting From?

Before you can evaluate a platform, it helps to know what your current setup lets you prove and where it leaves you guessing. Most organizations fall into one of four distinct measurement states.

Locate your current position on the grid:

Measurement State	What You Can Prove	The Missing Link
Activity-Only	Enrollments, course completions, and learner satisfaction.	No visibility into whether the training actually changed on-the-job behavior.
Fragmented Systems	Isolated data points trapped within separate learning and performance tools.	Connecting training to business outcomes requires tedious manual reconciliation in spreadsheets.
Partial Measurement	Solid baseline knowledge checks and successful, isolated pilot programs.	Behavior change is inconsistent, hard to verify at scale, and lacks a repeatable process.
Connected Measurement	Unified learning, performance, and skills data flowing into a single platform.	Clear, automated line of sight from a closed skill gap to business metrics like retention.

Most L&D teams fall somewhere in one of the first two states. That's the starting point this framework is built to move you past.

Define Success Before You Demo

Feature checklists and demo walkthroughs are no substitute for knowing what you're trying to fix. Answer these four questions before a vendor conversation:

1. What business problems does this platform need to solve?
2. What capabilities do employees need to gain, and how will you know they've gained them?
3. What workforce outcomes would count as success: retention, internal mobility, productivity, something else?
4. What does leadership need to see to consider this a good investment?

Establish Your Baselines

Without a starting point, you can't claim improvement. Confirm you can answer these:

- What is current performance on the KPIs this platform is meant to influence?
- Which skill gaps are the highest priority, and are they mapped to business strategy?
- What does your existing measurement process capture today?
- What integration exists between your learning, performance, and skills data right now?

Skipping this step means your L&D team ends up defending a platform's value after it's selected instead of proving it up front.

Set Your Targets

Vague goals produce vague proof. Get specific before you buy:

- What improvement are you targeting, in numbers? (Get specific: "Reduce time to competency from 90 to 60 days" rather than "Improve onboarding.")
- What's your timeline: a quick win within the next quarter, or a longer capability build?
- What's the minimum result that would justify the investment?

Time-to-competency is a clear example of why this matters. During ramp-up, you pay 100% of a salary but receive only partial productivity. For a mid-level corporate role, reducing time-to-full-productivity by just 30 days reclaims **roughly \$5,000 to \$10,000 per hire**.

Require Proof From Vendors

You've defined success, set your baseline, and picked your targets. Now hold vendors to them. Use these six criteria as your scorecard in every conversation:

- **Baseline readiness.** Can the platform capture pre-training performance and skills state without manual work?
- **Level 3 measurement support.** Does it operationalize manager observation and transfer confirmation, not just post-course surveys?
- **Outcome reporting.** Can you connect learning activity to retention, mobility, time to competency, and KPI movement?
- **Skills infrastructure.** Is there a usable, shared **skills taxonomy** with a way to verify skill acquisition, not just self-assessment?
- **Integration depth.** Are learning, performance, and skills data genuinely connected, or does someone still have to export and merge them by hand?
- **Evidence standard.** Can the vendor point to case studies and references that show business impact, not just usage stats?

A platform that can't check most of these boxes will leave you back where you started: reporting on activity instead of proving impact.



Is Your L&D Strategy Future-Proof?

Role-based training is a bottleneck in the age of AI. To stay competitive, embrace a skills-first architecture. Get the trend report: [From Roles to Skills: The New North Star for L&D](#).

Prove It Before You Pay For It

The four questions, the baselines, the targets, and the vendor scorecard all serve the same goal: making a purchase decision with evidence rather than hope. Most L&D teams are still reporting on activity rather than impact because nothing has forced the shift earlier. The vendor conversation is where that changes.

See what proof looks like in practice.

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