



# Setting Skills Priorities: Step by Step

Use our Skills Priority Matrix to  
focus your L&D resources where  
they matter most



# Why Prioritisation Matters

Skills are changing faster than ever, with 39% of workers' core skills expected to change by 2030, but resources remaining tight, every L&D decision counts. The challenge isn't just knowing what skills to develop—it's understanding how critical each one is to your business and how to balance your efforts across learning needs.

This Skills Priority Matrix is part of the three core pillars from our ['Navigating the Next Unknown'](#) eBook for future-ready L&D. It helps you categorise learning needs by business impact and urgency, then shows you how to allocate your resources across three priority levels. Rather than trying to do everything or focusing on just one area, this will help to balance immediate business needs with future capabilities - so you can deliver maximum impact with the time and budget you have.

## How to Use This Framework

### Identify

your organisation's learning and training needs

### Assign

each one an appropriate priority level as below

### Focus

most effort on Priority 1, some on Priority 2, least on Priority 3

### Review

quarterly as business needs change

## A Collaborative Approach

Skills prioritisation works best as a collaborative effort. Involve managers and business leaders in this process—they see skills gaps emerge in real-time and can help distinguish between genuinely critical needs and nice-to-have training that won't drive performance.



# The Skills Priority Matrix

The visual matrix below shows how to categorise any learning need based on two simple questions: “How much business impact will this have?” and “How urgently do we need it?” This creates three clear priority levels that help you decide where to focus your limited time and resources.

## Priority 1: Must-Have Now (High impact + immediate need)

Skills that keep your business running today: core job competencies, essential compliance, basic digital skills for current work, customer service fundamentals.

Example: New data protection training after regulatory changes

## Priority 2: Build for Tomorrow (High impact + future need)

Skills becoming critical but not yet urgent: AI collaboration, advanced digital literacy, emerging compliance areas, leadership development.

Example: Advanced AI prompt crafting

## Priority 3: Nice-to-Have (Low impact + flexible timing)

Interesting but not critical: experimental tech training, speculative skills, impressive-sounding but non-essential development. Example: Advanced presentation skills workshop

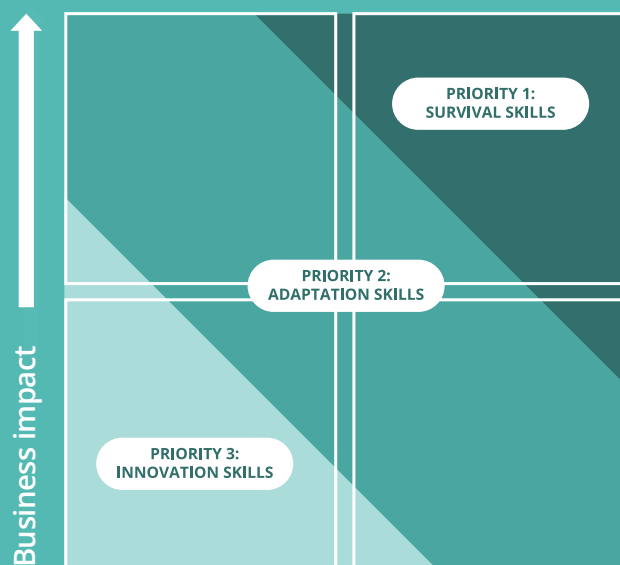
**Priority 1** survival skills are high impact and needed immediately

**Priority 2** adaption skills are growing in impact and urgency, they will be vital in the future

**Priority 3** innovation skills are lower impact with flexible timing

The examples above show you how to apply this thinking to real business situations.

Higher Impact



Time Urgency

More Urgency





## Priority 1

# Must-Have Now

High impact + immediate need (survival skills)

### What Goes Here

Skills that keep your business running today and meet critical requirements.

#### Examples

- Essential compliance training (health & safety, data protection)
- Core job competencies for new hires
- Customer service fundamentals
- Basic digital skills for current tools and processes
- Regulatory updates that affect your industry
- Skills needed for ongoing projects or contracts

#### Real Examples

- Construction company: "Health and safety updates" and "Site safety compliance" after regulatory changes
- Professional services firm: "Client data protection updates" and "Essential AI tools training for document efficiency" to maintain competitive pace
- Healthcare organisation: "Infection control protocols" and "Patient data protection" for operational continuity



## Priority 2

# Build for Tomorrow

High impact + future need (adaptation skills)

### What Goes Here

Skills that are becoming important but aren't urgently needed yet  
—invest here to stay ahead of competitors.

### Examples

- Advanced AI collaboration and workflow integration
- Advanced digital literacy and data analytics skills
- Leadership development for growing teams
- Emerging compliance requirements
- Cross-functional collaboration skills
- Advanced customer relationship management

### Real Examples

- Tech startup: “Leadership development for scaling teams” and “Cross-functional collaboration skills” as they move upmarket
- Hospitality group: “Emotional intelligence for customer service excellence” and “Advanced problem-solving for service recovery” for competitive advantage
- Professional services firm: “AI-assisted research skills” and “Advanced data analytics” to win future contracts





## Priority 3

# Nice-to-Have

Low impact + flexible timing (innovation skills)

### What Goes Here

Experimental technologies without clear business applications, speculative skill development, and training that sounds impressive but doesn't directly impact performance.

### Examples

- Advanced AI courses that don't apply to current work
- Advanced software training (for tools not currently used in your business)
- Strategic planning courses (without specific projects to apply them to)
- Emerging technology overviews
- Advanced analytics for roles that don't use data
- Innovation methodology training without specific projects

### Real Examples

- Financial services company: "Strategic planning courses" and "Business strategy overviews" without immediate business need
- Professional services firm: "Automation training for client work" and "Emerging technology overviews" for future exploration
- Healthcare provider: "AI diagnostic interpretation skills" and "Advanced technology concepts" without current implementation plans



# Resource Allocation Guide

With limited time and budget, successful L&D involves smart choices about where to invest for maximum business impact.

## Focus Most Effort - Priority 1 (Survival Skills)

- These keep the business running and meet essential requirements
- Don't compromise here—business continuity depends on it
- Include time for refresher training and new employee onboarding

## Some Effort - Priority 2 (Adaptation Skills)

- These help you stay competitive and prepare for what's coming
- Start small but be consistent—these investments add up over time
- Perfect for monthly development sessions or lunch-and-learns

## Least Effort - Priority 3 (Innovation Skills)

- These are experimental or speculative development opportunities
- Can be deferred when other priorities emerge
- Good for exploring emerging trends without immediate pressure

For example, you might allocate roughly 70% of your effort to Priority 1, 25% to Priority 2, and 5% to Priority 3. Don't worry about exact percentages - the key is getting the balance roughly right based on your business priorities.



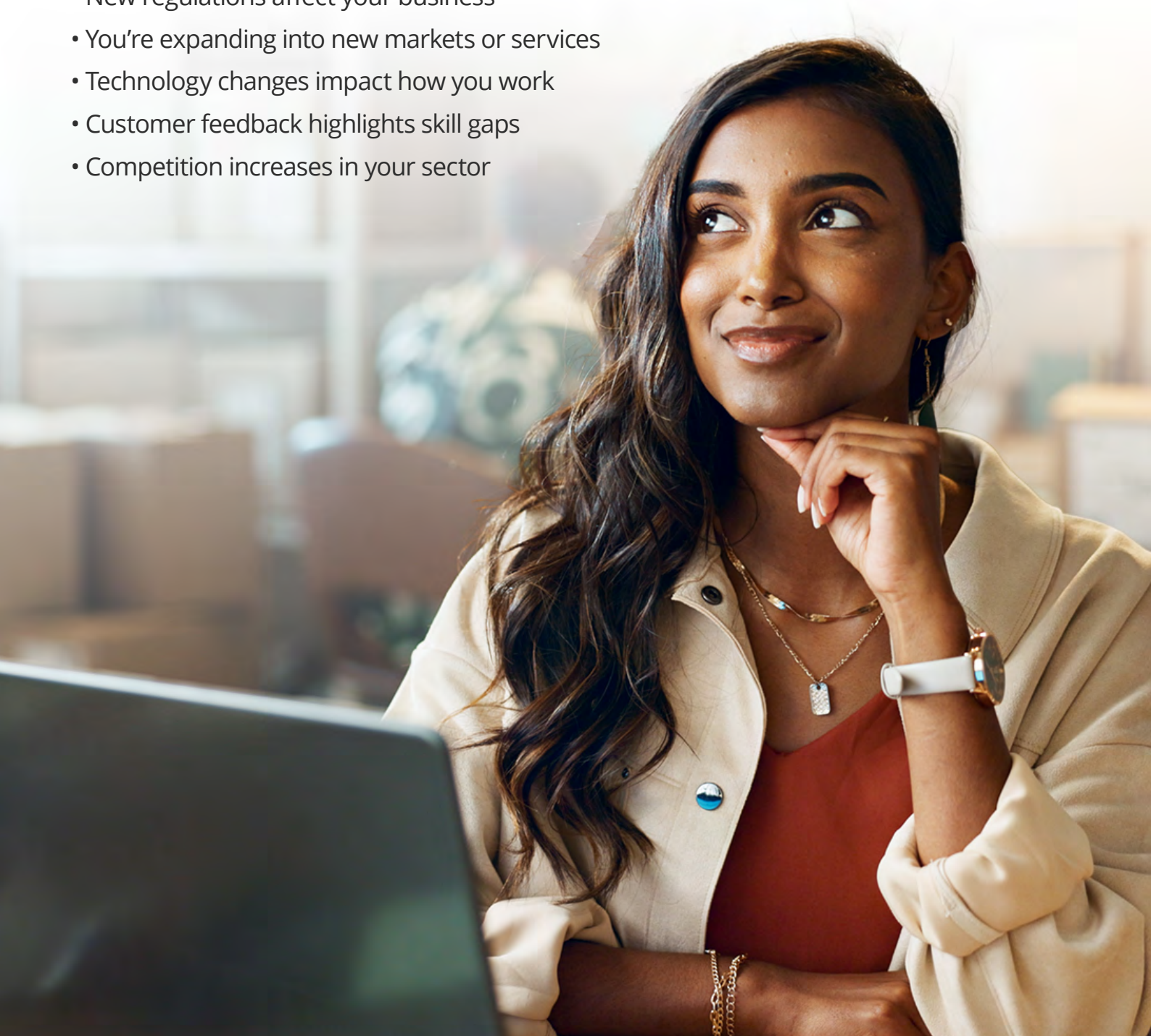
# Simple Review Process

## Every 3 Months, Ask

- What's changed in our business that affects these priorities?
- What new skills do we need that weren't on the list before?
- Is our current approach working—what should we adjust?

## Review Immediately When

- New regulations affect your business
- You're expanding into new markets or services
- Technology changes impact how you work
- Customer feedback highlights skill gaps
- Competition increases in your sector





# Ready to Put Your Priorities into Action?

Once you've identified your priority skills, you need the right tools to deliver them efficiently. The Access L&D Suite helps you execute this framework effectively:

## Priority 1

Comprehensive compliance libraries and rapid deployment capabilities through learning management ensure you never miss critical requirements

## Priority 2

Extensive upskilling content and future-focused courses help you build tomorrow's capabilities today

## Priority 3

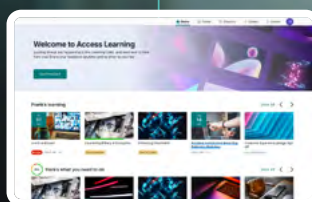
Self-directed learning libraries let employees explore the development opportunities right for them

## Ready to deliver more impact with less effort?

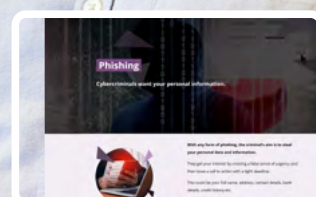
Find out more about the Access L&D suite

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