



Brandon Hall Group™

The Great L&D Reset

How Managed Learning Services Are
Redefining the Function



2026

Executive Interview



About Liberate



Liberate is a global learning transformation partner formed through the unification of EI Design, MPS Europa and Liberate Learning under a single brand. Born from a combined legacy spanning more than three decades, Liberate serves Fortune 500 companies, educational institutions and government clients across industries and geographies. The company offers an integrated suite of capabilities covering learning strategy and consulting, custom learning design, AI-enabled experiences, immersive VR and XR learning, performance support, managed learning services and workforce transformation. Liberate is headquartered in India, with teams operating across North America, Europe, the Middle East and APAC. It has been recognized as a Top Learning Services Company by Training Industry and a Top Custom eLearning Content Provider by eLearning Industry and holds Brandon Hall Group™ SmartChoice Preferred Provider status.

About Soma Bhaduri

Soma Bhaduri is the Business Head and Senior Vice President at Liberate. With over 20 years of leadership in the L&D sector, Soma is a seasoned consultant and strategist. She is dedicated to helping global enterprises navigate the complexities of digital transformation and re-skilling, ensuring that learning remains a core driver of organizational agility.



About Michael Rochelle

Today's conversation is moderated by **Michael Rochelle**. Michael is Chief Strategy Officer and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™, bringing his expertise in Human Capital Management. Michael has more than 30 years' experience in HR, IT, sales, marketing, business development and strategic and financial planning in Fortune 500 and venture- backed start-up organizations.



Q Michael

There's a growing narrative that traditional L&D teams are shrinking. Are we actually seeing the decline of in-house L&D? Or is the function being rewired into something fundamentally different?

A Soma

I don't really think in-house L&D is shrinking, but I do think it is fundamentally being rewired. Traditionally, L&D focused on building content, managing programs and handling execution, a model that worked when demand was predictable. Today, organizations face continuous re-skilling, up-skilling and rapidly changing priorities, requiring teams to operate differently.

Internal teams are moving toward focusing on skill strategy, capability mapping and aligning learning with business goals. They are becoming orchestrators rather than builders. While teams may become leaner, it's not just about cost; the work itself has changed. In-house L&D now defines the vision, sets standards

and ensures measurable impact, while the execution layer: content creation, platform management and global rollouts is delivered through an ecosystem of partners. They are shifting from content creators to capability architects and "control towers" that ensure learning is tightly woven with business outcomes.

Q Michael

Let's talk a little bit more about learning services. What do you see as the main drivers for when people look at learning services?

A Soma

Several forces are making Managed Learning Services (MLS) relevant today. The first is speed; organizations must re-skill global audiences at an unprecedented pace. Learning can no longer take months to design and deploy.

The second is capability. Modern learning involves AI-enabled content, hyper-personalization, immersive experiences and integrated tech

stacks. Many internal teams lack these capabilities and building them in-house can be slow and expensive.

The third factor is operational complexity. L&D now manages global workforces, localization needs and continuous regulatory updates. It is an “always-on” resource-intensive function that lean internal teams struggle to manage alone.

Finally, there are cost and efficiency pressures. Organizations want to scale without significantly expanding fixed internal teams. Managed models allow them to flex capacity and access specialized skills without high fixed-cost structures. It’s about adopting a different operating model where L&D remains strategic while partners handle execution and innovation.

Q Michael

From our research, I’d throw in the scale of expertise itself. Working with an organization of your stature, your experience is growing at an exponential rate. People need part of their human intelligence to be outsourced

to experts who stay on top of everything. L&D functions are often so busy with tasks that they struggle to up-skill themselves at scale.

A Soma

That’s true and we see that every day.

Q Michael

Everyone has the best of intentions, but what do they get wrong when looking at outsourcing learning? Where are the missteps?

A Soma

Managed services create the most value in areas requiring scale, continuity and specialized capability, such as managing a global content ecosystem or learning operations and administration. These operational tasks are critical but consume strategic bandwidth.

Where organizations struggle is when they outsource strategy entirely or fail to establish strong governance. The most successful model keeps skill strategy, business alignment and decision-making in-house. Partners should drive execution and innovation, not own the direction. It isn't just "outsourcing learning"; it is building a partnership model where the internal team defines the direction and the partner operationalizes that vision.

Q Michael

Let's bring up AI and the nexus between managed services and AI. Where do you see AI playing in this relationship?

A Soma

AI is a major accelerant. It enables hyper-personalized learning journeys and adaptive experiences at scale, but these require continuous orchestration behind the scenes to identify the right roles and skill levels. AI also transforms content creation with faster development cycles and automated updates.

However, to be sustainable, you need governance and quality checks integrated with the learning strategy. AI can also help with "skills intelligence" — identifying gaps and recommending pathways — but this only works when data and content ecosystems are seamlessly connected and optimized. Most L&D teams can experiment with AI tools, but operationalizing them at scale is a different challenge. Managed learning services bring the technology, design and analytics into a single ecosystem, making AI-driven scale possible and sustainable.

Q Michael

Our research shows 46% of organizations are at the lower end of AI readiness. A partner who understands AI could clearly help them avoid missteps. One final question: if you were designing the ideal future-state L&D function, what would that look like in-house versus managed externally?

A Soma

The ideal model is a lean internal team paired with managed scale. The internal function focuses on strategic priorities: skill strategy, business alignment, defining the experience and strong governance. They act as the “control tower” ensuring learning maps to KPIs and business goals.

Around that core, the managed partner brings execution at scale — managing content ecosystems, platforms, global rollouts and specialized capabilities like AI-enabled development, AR/VR/XR and advanced analytics dashboards. This allows internal teams to remain agile and focused on direction while the partner provides flexible, on-demand execution and continuous innovation. It shifts L&D from a delivery function to a strategic engine. Managed services don't replace L&D; they help it operate at the pace and complexity of today's business.



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