

A high-angle, blurred photograph of several business professionals in business attire walking up a modern staircase. The image is overlaid with a warm orange-to-red gradient. The text 'Don't Let Your Members Disassociate' is written in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image. Below the text are two horizontal, brush-stroke-like lines in teal and orange.

Don't Let
Your Members
Disassociate

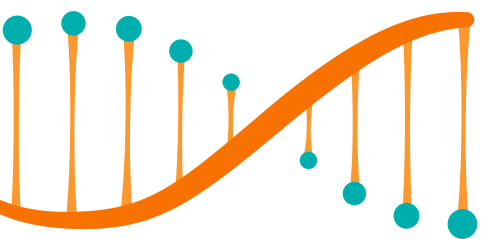
WE LEARN

Your Members Are Voting with Their Feet

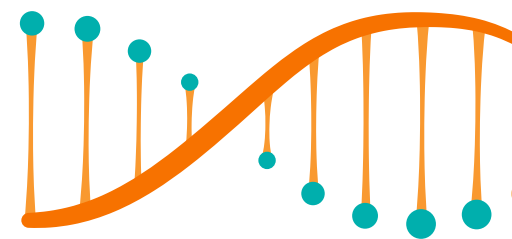
Listen. Can you hear that?

That is the sound of your members not engaging with your associations' learning. That is the sound of your members choosing to invest their discretionary spending on education or continuing education (CE) with another provider. That is the sound of your members disassociating.

Whether you have members, certificate holders or diplomates and whether you are delivering learning, education, continuing education, practice management or professional development, associations should play a role in the learning that their members are receiving. So, why do so many associations struggle in this regard? When it comes to learning, why are members disassociating?



Lifelong learning is **in the DNA** of associations — their secret sauce — yet many associations continue to ask themselves why their members do not engage with their learning experiences.



As the nature of work has shifted and employers begin to focus less on degrees — and more on skills attainment, stackable credentials and skills validation — one would expect that associations, the skill and knowledge validators of the profession, would become the focal point of how their members build and develop their skills.

Adult learning has evolved over the past few decades, with the rate of change accelerating significantly in the past few

years. This pace of change continues unabated. It is **estimated** that 50% of all workers will need reskilling by 2025, as technology adoption increases. To keep pace, organizations have shifted their processes and services online — with a digital, mobile-first approach becoming the rallying cry for many organizations, all while adapting to the changing needs of workers and customers. Professional associations were not immune to these changes. Because just like everything else, members' needs are evolving.

Professional associations provide a range of benefits to members, specifically learning and development (L&D) opportunities (i.e., education, continuing education, practice management, etc.) to advance their knowledge and skills in their profession. To remain competitive and create more value for members and strengthen the tie between the member and the organization, associations must rethink how they deliver learning — and they can start by leveraging insights from corporate training.



While the content may be different, associations can leverage best practices and principles from corporate L&D, investing in learning design, enhancing the user experience of their digital learning products and providing a blend of delivery modalities. Members are already accustomed to receiving quality learning experiences from their employers and, naturally, they expect the same quality from their professional association when it comes to delivery modalities and the quality of the experiences. By focusing on these factors, associations can equip members with the knowledge and skills

they need to be successful in their careers, and in turn, drive growth for the profession and create a more indelible bond between the member and the organization.

Ultimately, does it provide a modern experience that members have come to expect from learning experiences they are receiving elsewhere? Let's examine the differences between corporate L&D and associations to better understand how associations can create impactful learning experiences that exceed members' expectations.



The **success** of association learning will depend on whether the learning experience is up to par.



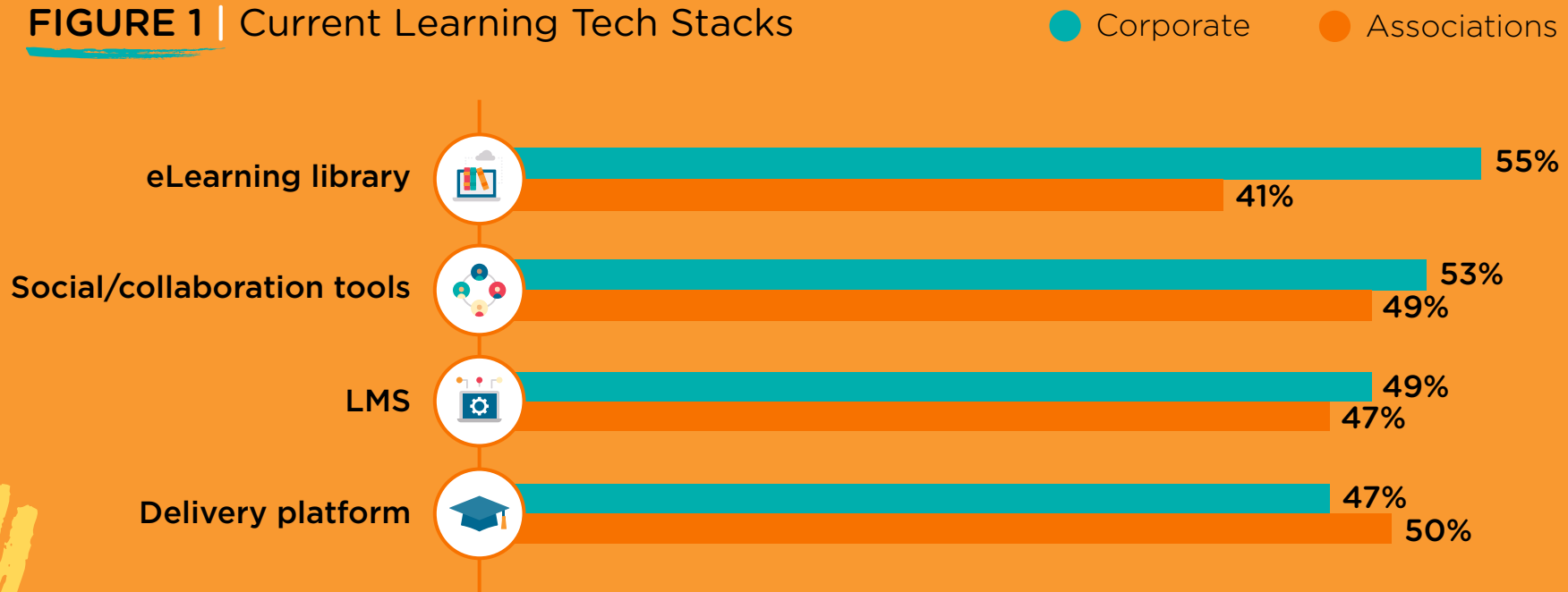
Your Members Use Modern Technology, They Expect Their Learning to Be Modern As Well

Technology **facilitates connection**, and in today's hybrid and remote world, connection is everything.

Advancements in technology enable learning organizations to reach dispersed learners, generate just-in-time content and provide detailed data on learning consumption. Through that lens, technology powers learning, which is why **investing in the right learning technologies is so important** for organizations.

As shown in Figure 1, corporate learning uses a variety of learning technologies, most frequently using eLearning, collaboration tools and a learning management system (LMS). Associations appear to be placing less emphasis on eLearning and more emphasis on using delivery platforms to create and deliver learning content, resulting in missing learning modalities and features used to engage learners.

FIGURE 1 | Current Learning Tech Stacks





Determining both learners' and organizational needs is essential to ensuring that the right tools and modalities are being used. Associations are often run by volunteers or have limited staff and need more flexible options to update and create content for members; whereas corporate learning is typically developed by an internal learning team or vendor who supports learning for the organization. Conducting a thorough needs analysis can help learning leaders select the right tools, modalities and partners to achieve the intended outcomes.

How learning is delivered is another important consideration for meeting learners' needs. When it comes to the proportion of delivery modalities, Figure 2 on page 11 shows that corporate learning and associations are equally likely to offer virtual instructor-led learning (VILT) and **blended learning** formats, but the similarities end there.

A Mix of Modalities Matters



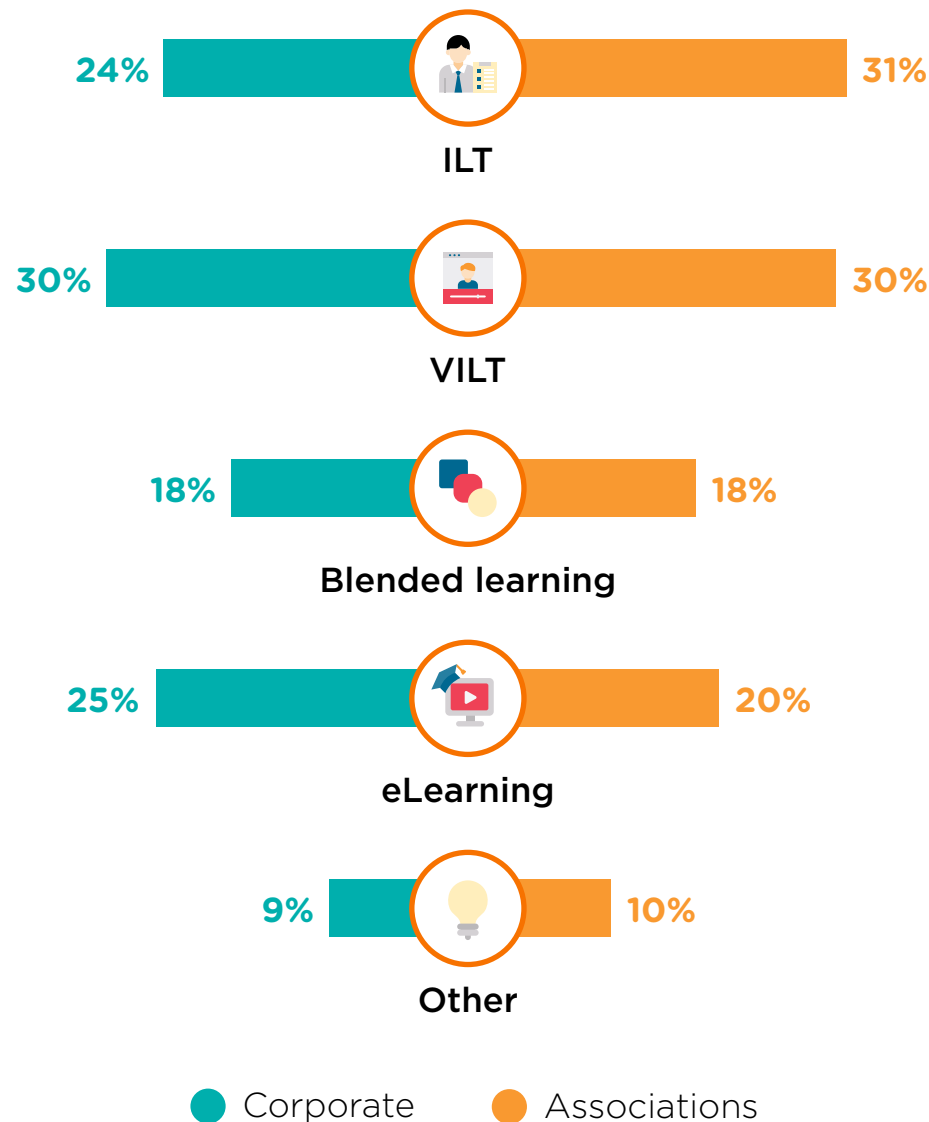
Associations are more likely to cling to more traditional approaches like instructor-led training (ILT) and are less likely to use eLearning courses when compared to corporate training. While this is not necessarily surprising, as classroom learning is a staple for many organizations, it shows that associations place value on face-to-face opportunities. However, as the past two years have shown, the need to adopt a digital approach to education is crucial for associations.

Consider this: If only 15 to 20% of your membership attends your annual meeting or major professional development events, then that means you are not engaged with 80 to 85% of your members. No wonder members might choose to disassociate. Your members are seeking resources for continual learning to enrich themselves personally and set themselves apart professionally. Associations have the advantage here, as they can continuously update programming to appeal to modern learners.



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FIGURE 2 | Usage of Delivery Modalities



As COVID-19 restrictions continue to dissipate and travel resumes globally, it would be tempting for associations, particularly those that made some pivots to digital — whether through eLearning or hybrid learning — to return to the “old ways of doing things.” However, the modern learner wants learning that is available when they need it — often on their device, on their timetable and on their own terms.

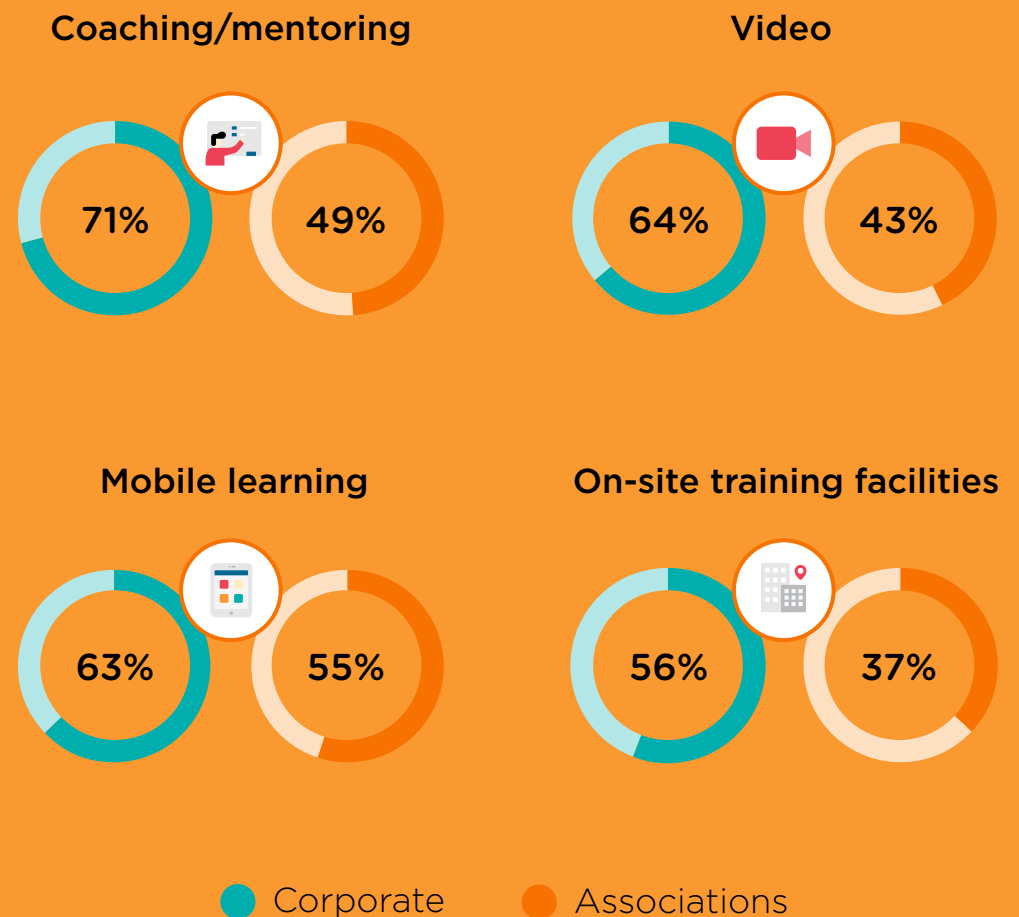
A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored blouse and dark pants, stands at the head of a long conference table, gesturing towards a laptop. Several people are seated around the table, looking towards her. The room has large windows on the right side, and the overall lighting is warm and professional.

Content Is Still King, but How You Support Your Members' Content Journeys Will Make or Break the Experience

There are various methods to deliver content to learners. Corporate learning and associations both use coaching and mentoring, video-based learning and mobile learning (Figure 3). It's not surprising to see the high rate of adoption of coaching and mentoring for corporate training, with more organizations embracing a **culture of coaching** and providing ongoing support and development to all workers — not just executives or high-potential talent. Almost one-half of associations are following suit and leveraging coaching to provide peer-to-peer learning support — tapping into a top perk for joining a professional association.

Additionally, it is interesting to note the degree to which associations have turned to mobile learning to support content delivery. With 55% of associations using mobile learning to deliver content, this signals that they are recognizing the need to provide accessible content to globally or geographically dispersed members.

FIGURE 3 | Methods of Content Delivery Support



Learning Challenges

Delivering effective learning is no easy task. Learning is not a one-time event and shouldn't be treated as such. Learning is a continuous, lifelong process that occurs over the span of one's career or lifetime.

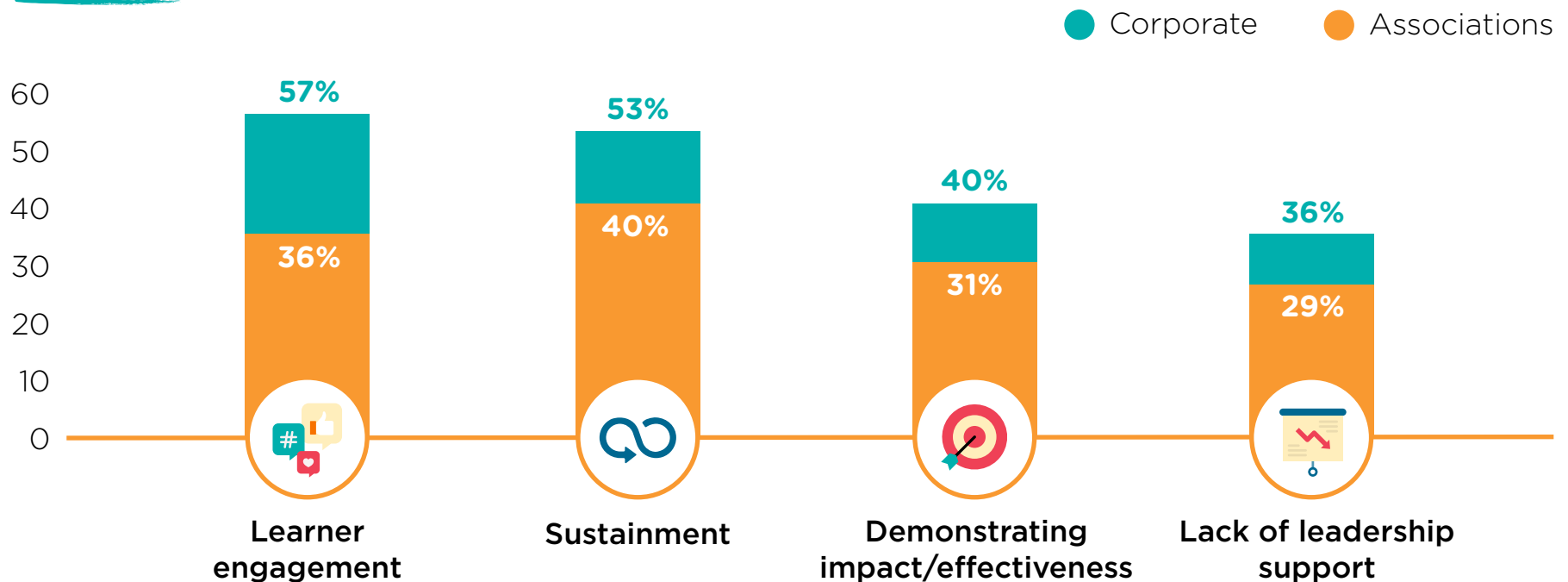
Figure 4 on page 15 highlights common learning challenges, showing that learner engagement and **sustaining the impact of learning** are pressing challenges for both corporate learning and associations. On average, corporate learning contends with more challenges than associations because of the breadth of what needs to be accomplished, so associations should have fewer obstacles. However, "easier" logistics does not absolve associations from needing to address engagement and sustainment.

Associations, just like corporate training, must consider their audience and deliver engaging learning programs. If learners aren't engaged, then learning will inevitably not stick, making reinforcement and sustainment nearly impossible. And if sustainment doesn't occur, then what's the point of delivering training?



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FIGURE 4 | Learning Challenges



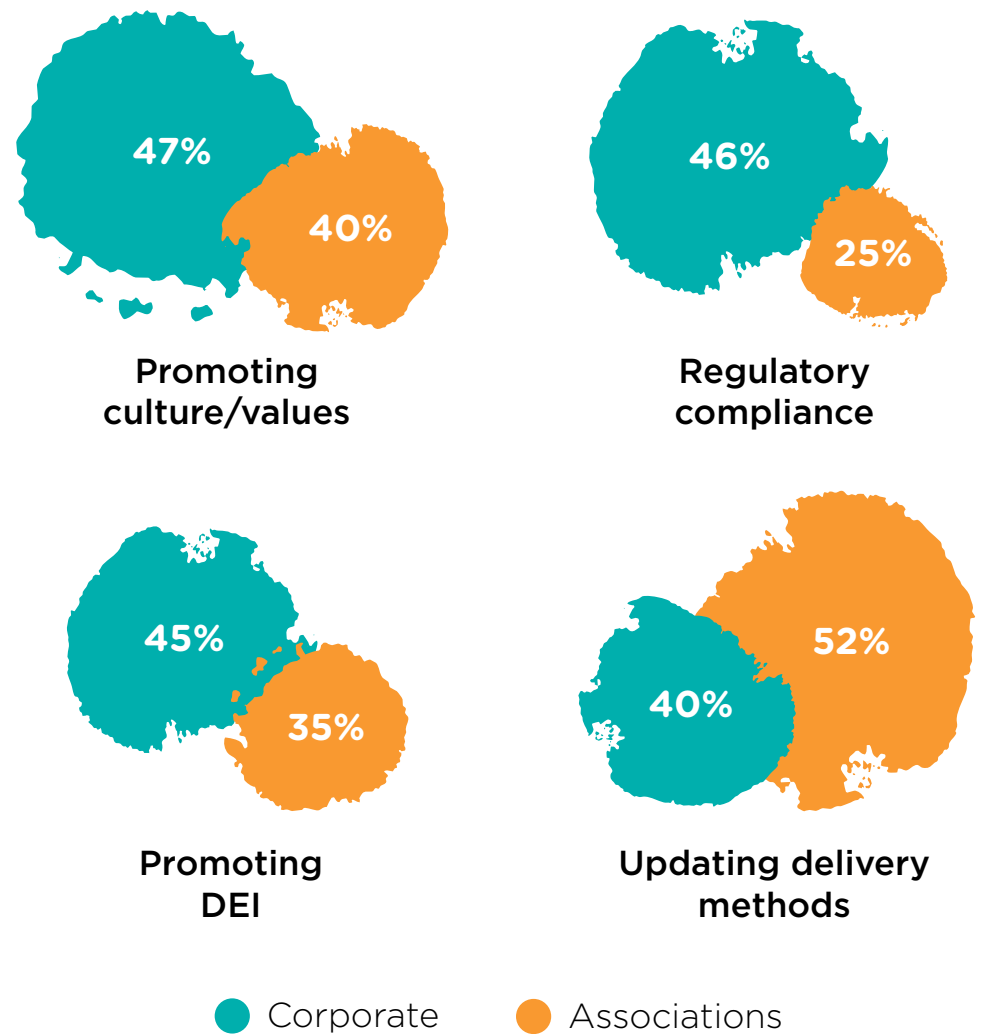


Reaching Your Members Should Drive Your Learning Investment

Why an organization invests in learning is unique to every organization. There are significant differences between corporate learning and associations when it comes to their “why.” For associations, the primary factor for learning investment is updating how content is delivered. For corporate training, there’s nearly a three-way tie between promoting culture and values, compliance, and promoting [diversity, equity and inclusion \(DEI\)](#).

Echoing the differences seen with learning challenges, there are more reasons for corporate learning leaders to make investments in training. Most associations identified one to three drivers, whereas those on the corporate side had a broader set of drivers on average.

FIGURE 5 | Learning Investment Factors





Making Membership Sticky

With the shelf-life of skills shrinking and continuous **upskilling** becoming essential to keep pace with change, associations can play a huge role in the lifelong learning of their members with engaging, modern learning solutions. For instance, implementing **digital badges** can promote ongoing learning and boost engagement by allowing members to showcase their new skills to their peer network.

By leveraging learning as a product, associations can support their members' development while generating a lucrative revenue stream for the business. Some of the ways that associations can offer learning solutions to members include:



Providing stackable, meaningful recognition.



Bundling learning with new membership packages.



Member-generated content repositories.



Selling to non-members to entice them to join the association.



Selling standalone courses to existing members.



Selling through channel partners.

Marketing learning to existing and potential members can help to expand association membership — but it can do more than that. Learning can help associations put more skilled and knowledgeable professionals in the field — advancing the entire profession. For professionals, learning is certainly not a one-time event. They need continuous learning over the span of their careers to refine their skills and expand their knowledge. And associations can be that source of ongoing development.

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A Clear Call to Action

While continuing education is mandated for many professions, learning doesn't need to be a check-the-box activity. Associations can move past the “talking head” PowerPoint courses, the sole reliance on live meeting formats and the “click next, click next, click next” approach to learning. Associations can become learning champions, assuming their place as the provider of lifelong learning for members while also celebrating their personal and professional growth. Associations can be a primary source of professional development for their members throughout their career journeys; however, this begins by marketing

the value of learning to members and delivering world-class learning experiences that move far beyond a cookie-cutter training events.

Taking notes from corporate training, associations can deliver the learning that members have come to expect — and need — to further their professional growth. While there's no one-size-fits-all approach to delivering training, associations must harness their focus on finding ways to create engaging learning experiences that motivate and inspire professionals to apply that knowledge in the field.



About WeLearn

WeLearn changes how people engage in learning so that they — and their organizations — can reach their goals. Through visually appealing, thoughtfully designed learning experiences, WeLearn is transforming how both companies and associations develop and connect learners through facilitated, collaborative learning.

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