go skills

The Upskilling Forecast: What's Ahead for 2025-27

A GoSkills Report for HR, L&D, and C-Suite Decision-Makers

A message from our co-founder

"

At GoSkills, we've always believed that learning should be simple, impactful, and accessible — not a chore to complete, but a tool to empower. As the workplace continues to evolve faster than ever, our mission remains clear: help people grow in ways that actually move the needle for their teams and organizations.

We hope these insights spark ideas, guide decisions, and help you build learning programs that not only meet today's needs — but future-proof your workforce for what's next.

Bhavneet Chahal
Co-founder of GoSkills

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Executive summary

Pressure on learning and development (L&D) budgets has never been higher. Between January 2022 and April 2025, GoSkills conducted a study of 1,902 organizations that were either using a learning management system to deploy employee training, or actively exploring solutions.

Three megatrends surfaced:

• The Excel-Leadership convergence
• Microlearning as a default
• Pathway from power skills to data skills

These insights are paired with external benchmarks from LinkedIn, Microsoft, and academic meta-studies to illuminate how learning design, technology, and analytics must evolve between 2025 and 2027.

The study concludes with a practical implementation blueprint to help L&D teams confidently navigate the rapid changes transforming the industry, culminating in bold predictions for the next two years.

Three megatrends

1

Excel-Leadership convergence

Excel remains the most requested technical skill, while leadership and communication surge. Organizations need blended curricula that tighten the link between data fluency and human collaboration.

2

Microlearning as a default

References to microlearning tripled across the two-year period. In the attention economy, L&D professionals demand five-minute lessons as a replacement for hour-long webinars. The positive effect is a reduction in content development time and higher course completion rates.

3

Pathway from power skills to data skills

Decision-makers who mention Power BI also cite Excel. Sequenced pathways that scaffold from spreadsheets to BI dashboards deliver 2.3 times higher completion and measurable business impact.

Macro forces

> **Skills once deemed 'nice-to-have' now underpin productivity, compliance, and employee retention, turning L&D from a discretionary perk to a board-level priority.**

Emerging trends and external pressures can significantly impact strategic planning and operational adjustments. Organizations must remain agile, continually adapting to these evolving landscapes to sustain growth and relevance. Workforce skills are no exception.

Three major forces are accelerating this shift.

Macro forces

AI acceleration

Generative AI represents the most disruptive workplace shift since the advent of the internet. Nearly half of CEOs (49%) anticipate that core skill requirements will change within just two years.

Hybrid volatility

Digital toggling and switching tasks every 47 seconds drains cognitive capacity; micro-doses of learning align with attention economics.
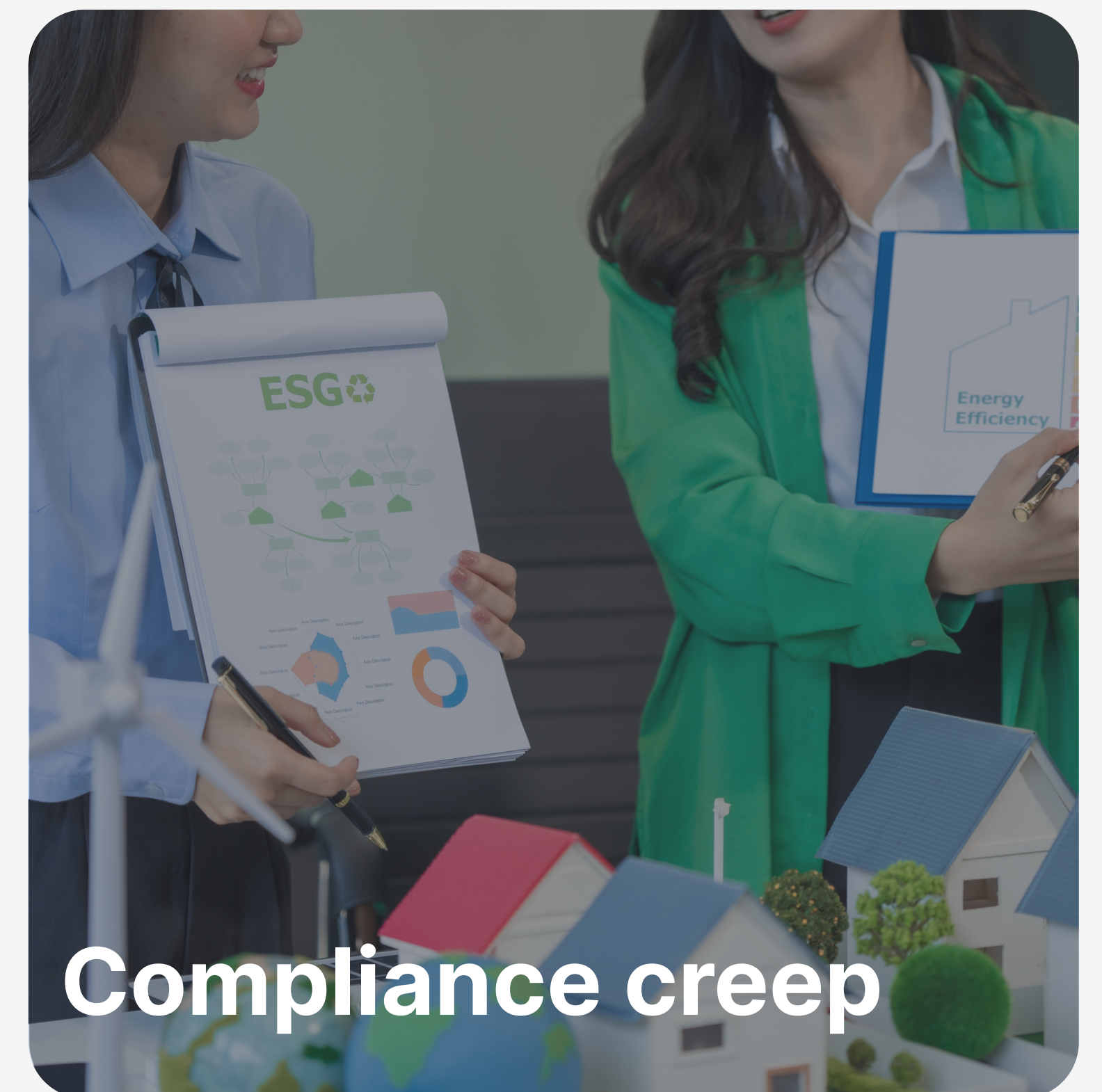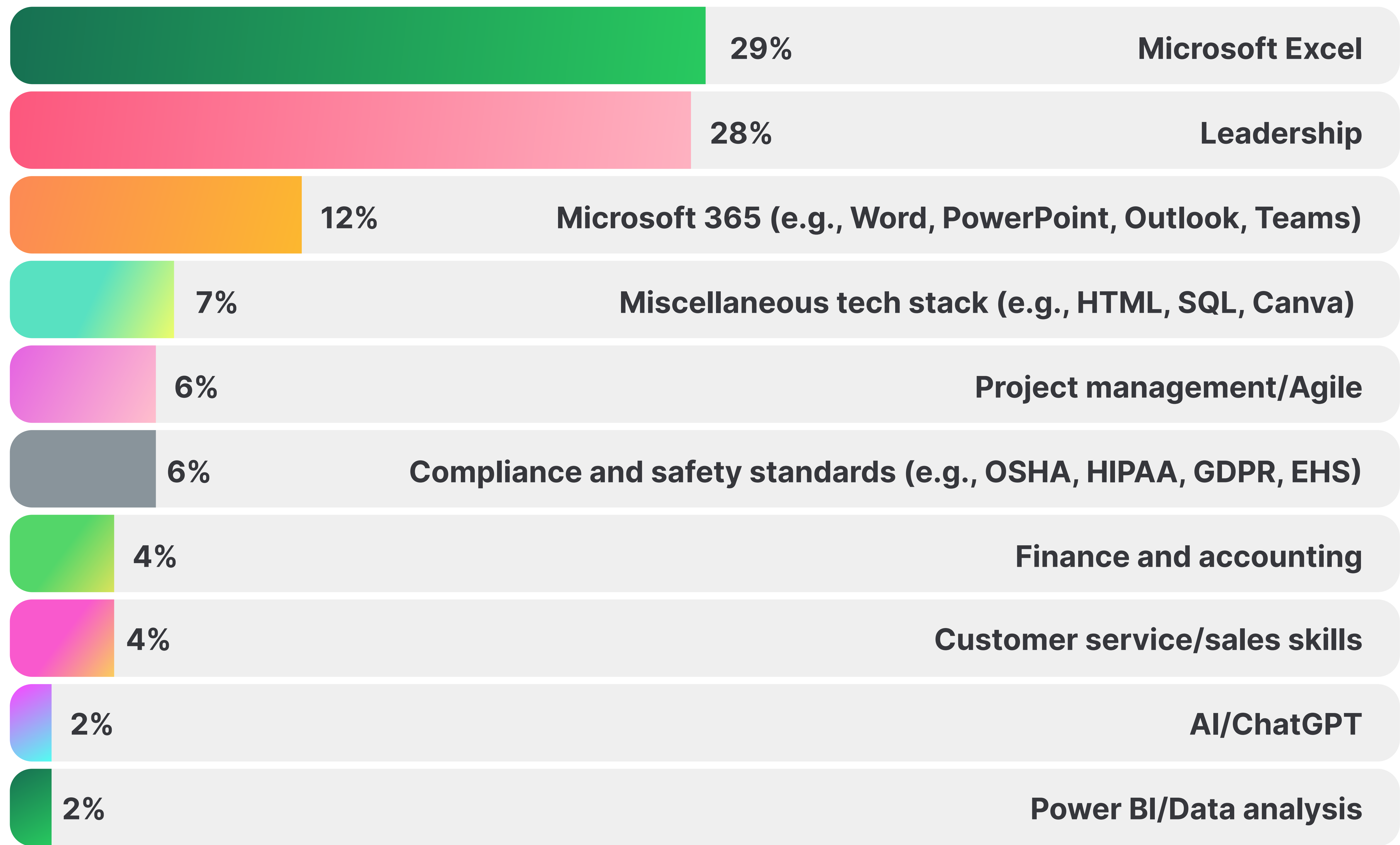

Compliance creep

Global safety, privacy, and Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) rules are expected to expand year over year, making evidence-based training an audit imperative.

Excel – Leadership convergence

Among 1,510 decision-makers seeking off-the-shelf course content, 47% identified specific skill gaps they wanted to address within their organization.

29%	**Microsoft Excel**
28%	**Leadership**
12%	**Microsoft 365 (e.g., Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, Teams)**
7%	**Miscellaneous tech stack (e.g., HTML, SQL, Canva)**
6%	**Project management/Agile**
6%	**Compliance and safety standards (e.g., OSHA, HIPAA, GDPR, EHS)**
4%	**Finance and accounting**
4%	**Customer service/sales skills**
2%	**AI/ChatGPT**
2%	**Power BI/Data analysis**

> **There was overwhelming demand for technical and soft-skill courses — specifically, Excel and Leadership.**

The research also revealed that all mentions of Power BI co-occurred with Excel.

While references to AI and ChatGPT were minimal by comparison, all of them emerged after October 2024, and doubled quarter over quarter.

Why Excel still dominates

More than 40 years since its launch, and despite the rise of competing platforms and newer technology, Excel remains one of the most in-demand technical skills in the workplace. Why does it continue to hold such a dominant position?

1 Installed ubiquity

With an estimated 750 million – 1.2 billion users worldwide, Excel is the default tool for budgeting, costing, and fast, practical analysis. Its global footprint makes it the *lingua franca* of business, used by everyone from entry-level analysts to senior executives.

2 The on-ramp to AI

Microsoft Copilot integrates GPT-4 directly inside Excel, turning spreadsheets into one of the fastest and most intuitive entry points to generative AI, especially for non-coders. This makes Excel not just a legacy tool, but a launchpad for modern AI adoption.

3 Speed without dependencies

Excel fills a vital gap for under-resourced teams, allowing them to perform fast, flexible analysis without reliance on data engineers or complex tools.

4 Gatekeeper to BI

Excel fills a vital gap for under-resourced teams, allowing them to perform fast, flexible analysis without reliance on data engineers or complex tools.

Why leadership skills surge

> **LinkedIn's 2024 Workplace Learning Report ranks leadership, communication, and adaptability as the top three power skills CEOs value.**

This was echoed in how often our research respondents emphasized the importance of soft skills.

Some key drivers of this demand are:

• Hybrid coordination
• AI-driven change management
• Retention advantage

Demand drivers

Hybrid coordination

Leaders need to effectively manage across time zones and asynchronous communication channels.

AI-driven change management
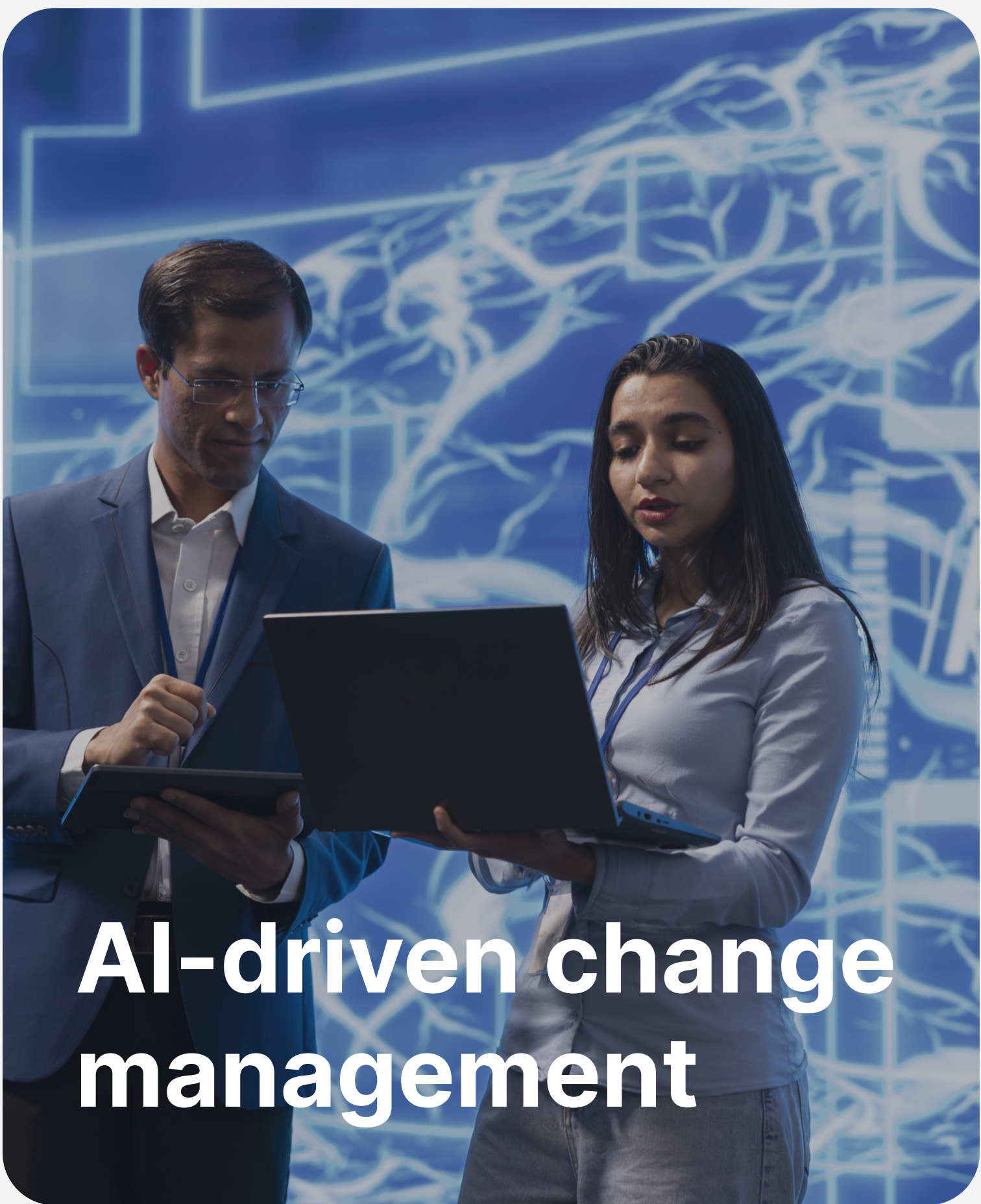
Managers are responsible for helping teams navigate shifting roles as automation reshapes the workplace.

Retention advantage

Soft-skill investment signals a commitment to career growth, key in competitive labor markets.

Industry-specific capability matrix

Across every industry, the combination of Excel, leadership, and soft skills has the power to create real, lasting impact. When teams demonstrate data fluency, communicate effectively, and lead with confidence, organizations see measurable improvements in areas like compliance, operational efficiency, and growth. Here are a few examples of how this plays out in different sectors.

| Sector	Top skill sets	Business use case
Manufacturing	• Excel modeling • Safety leadership • Lean problem-solving	Compliance and efficiency
Healthcare	• Data hygiene • Patient communication • Change leadership	Quality metrics and regulation
Non-profit	• PivotTables • Storytelling • Digital fundraising	Donor transparency
Tech-SaaS	• Advanced Excel • Cross-functional leadership • Data storyboarding	Investor reporting

What this means for your L&D program

The sector-specific capability matrix in the previous section illustrates how leaders can translate insight into action. Below are three practical ways to apply those insights using the capabilities built into the organization's learning management system (LMS).

1 **Dual-track paths**

Pilot a combined Excel + Leadership journey. Where applicable, use **GoSkills Learning Paths** to guide learners through a structured, sequenced experience.
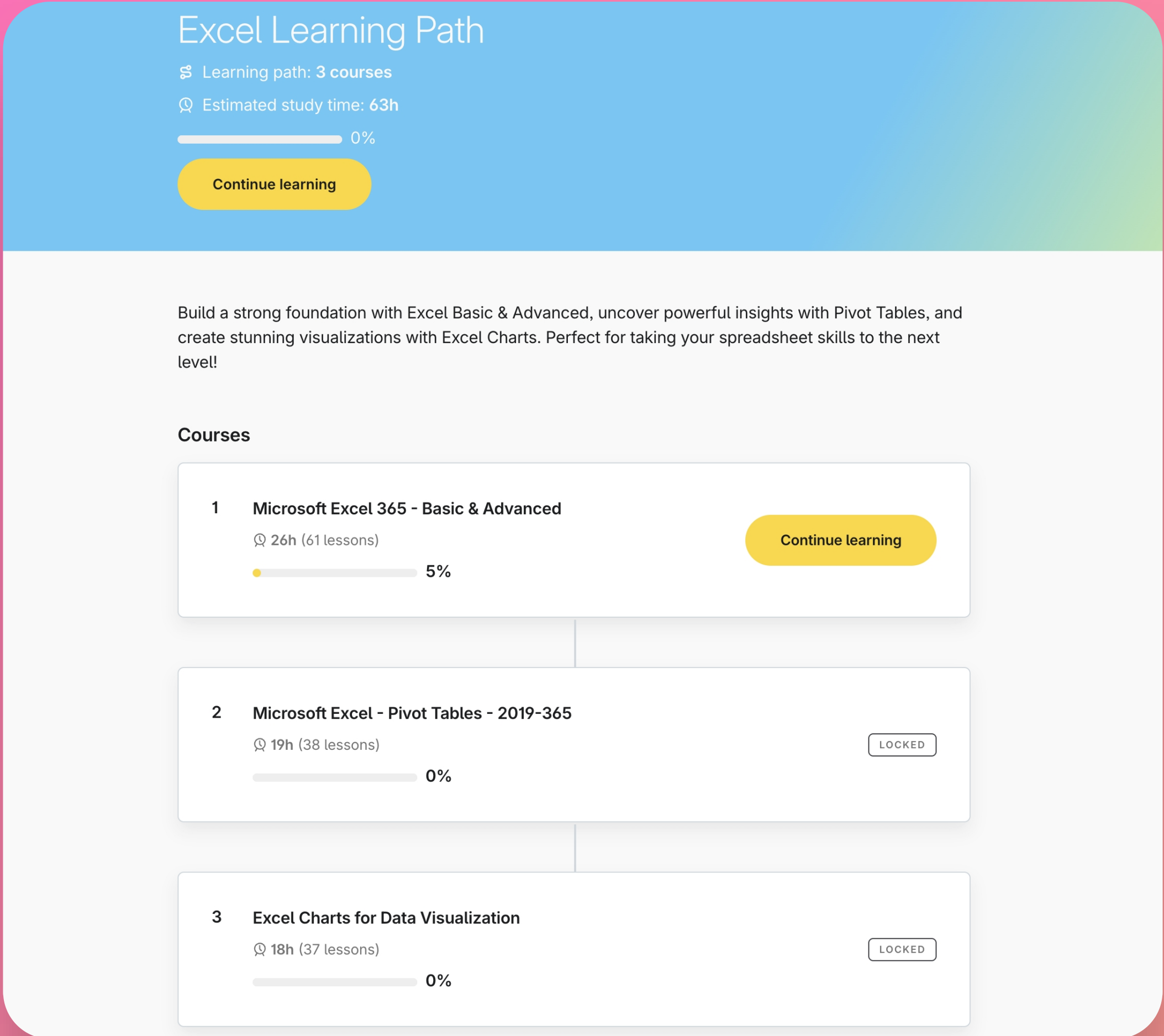
2 **Contextual practice**

Encourage learners to use **AI tools** within the course content to ask questions like *"Simplify this lesson"* or *"Give me an example of this principle in action."* This shifts the experience from passive viewing to active engagement.
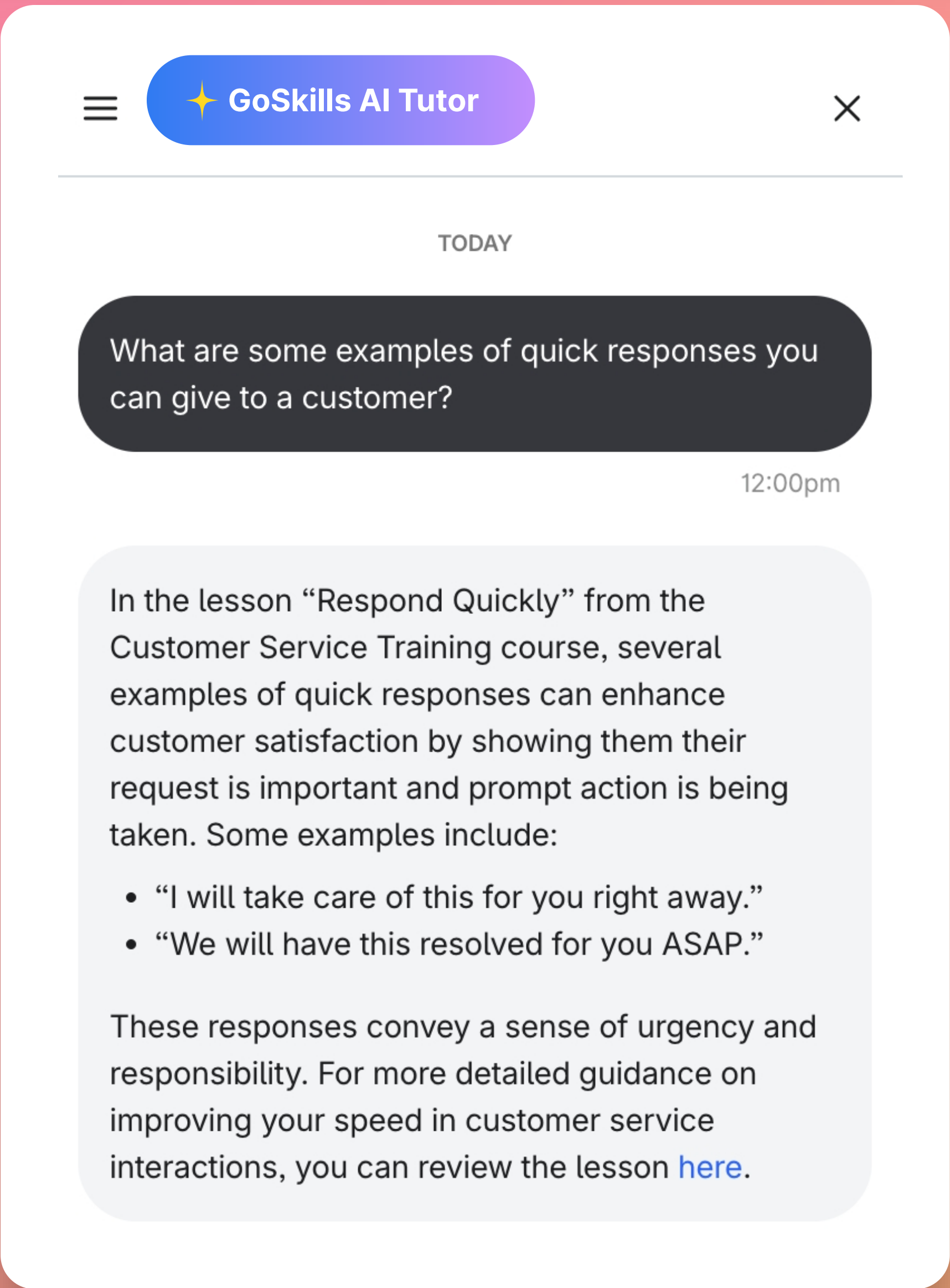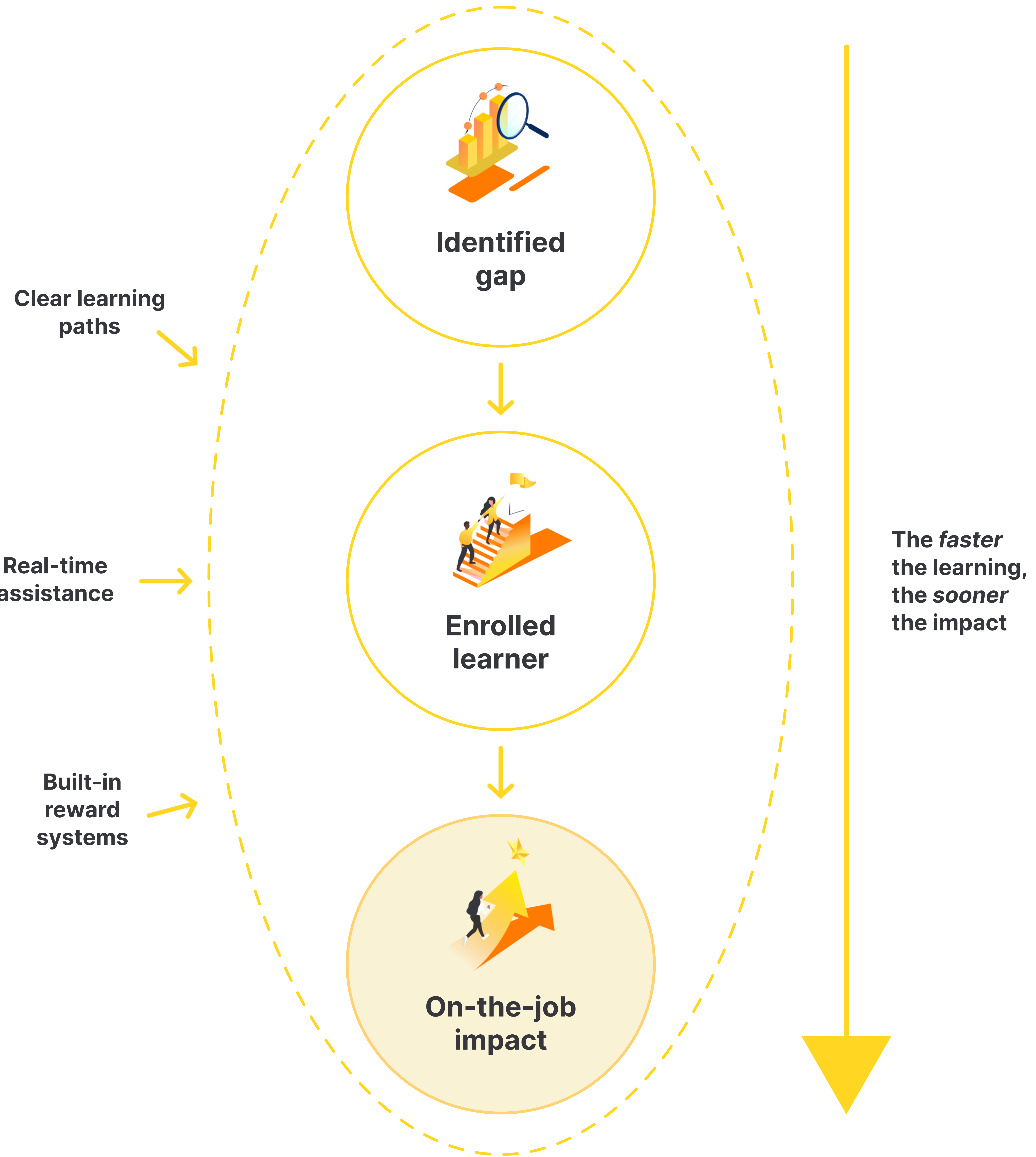
3 **Progress milestones and certificates**

Use GoSkills to issue custom completion certificates and milestone badges, allowing learners to showcase their achievements internally or on platforms like LinkedIn.

Excel Learning Path

Learning path: **3 courses**
Estimated study time: **63h**
0%

Continue learning

Build a strong foundation with Excel Basic & Advanced, uncover powerful insights with Pivot Tables, and create stunning visualizations with Excel Charts. Perfect for taking your spreadsheet skills to the next level!

Courses

1	Microsoft Excel 365 - Basic & Advanced
	26h (61 lessons)
	5% — **Continue learning**

2	Microsoft Excel - Pivot Tables - 2019-365
	19h (38 lessons)
	0% — LOCKED

3	Excel Charts for Data Visualization
	18h (37 lessons)
	0% — LOCKED

✦ **GoSkills AI Tutor** ✕

TODAY

What are some examples of quick responses you can give to a customer?

12:00pm

In the lesson "Respond Quickly" from the Customer Service Training course, several examples of quick responses can enhance customer satisfaction by showing them their request is important and prompt action is being taken. Some examples include:

- "I will take care of this for you right away."
- "We will have this resolved for you ASAP."

These responses convey a sense of urgency and responsibility. For more detailed guidance on improving your speed in customer service interactions, you can review the lesson here.

By combining these three strategies, decision-makers will hit their upskilling targets months ahead of peers who are still caught up in feature comparisons. In today's fast moving environment, shortening the learning cycle is the surest way to build organizational resilience. Clear learning paths, real-time assistance, and built-in rewards systems offer that acceleration — without the usual implementation drag.

Clear learning paths

Identified gap

Real-time assistance

Enrolled learner

The *faster* the learning, the *sooner* the impact

Built-in reward systems

On-the-job impact

Microlearning as the default

Microlearning has moved from a trending term to a baseline expectation. In our study, L&D professionals didn't just express awareness — they explicitly requested terms like "micro-learning," "micro-credential," and "bite-sized" content. This signals a decisive shift in how training is designed, delivered, and consumed in the modern workplace.

Why microlearning now?

The rise of hybrid work, information overload, and AI-assisted workflows has fundamentally altered attention spans and time availability. In response, microlearning offers a flexible, high-impact solution that aligns with the pace of today's digital work environments.

Research across cognitive psychology and workplace-learning studies converges on three core principles.

Three core principles

1

Retention through spacing and chunking

Delivering content in micro-formats of three to seven minutes improves long-term retention by up to 80% compared to traditional hour-long sessions.

2

Avoiding cognitive load

According to cognitive-load theory, learner attention and working memory deteriorates rapidly after the 15-minute mark, leading to shallow understanding and low knowledge transfer.

3

In-the-flow learning

When content is optimized for mobile, organizations often see productivity gains because learners use natural workflow gaps — such as commutes or downtime — to engage with training.

What microleaning looks like in practice

Effective microlearning isn't simply "short." It is intentional, focused, and aligned with real outcomes. Key instructional strategies include:

1 **One clear objective per lesson**

Each micro-lesson should focus on a single skill or concept, e.g., *"Learn how to insert a pivot table."*

2 **Rich retrieval practice**

Scenario-based quiz questions promote knowledge application and retention, which are far more effective than rote recall or trivia-style checks.
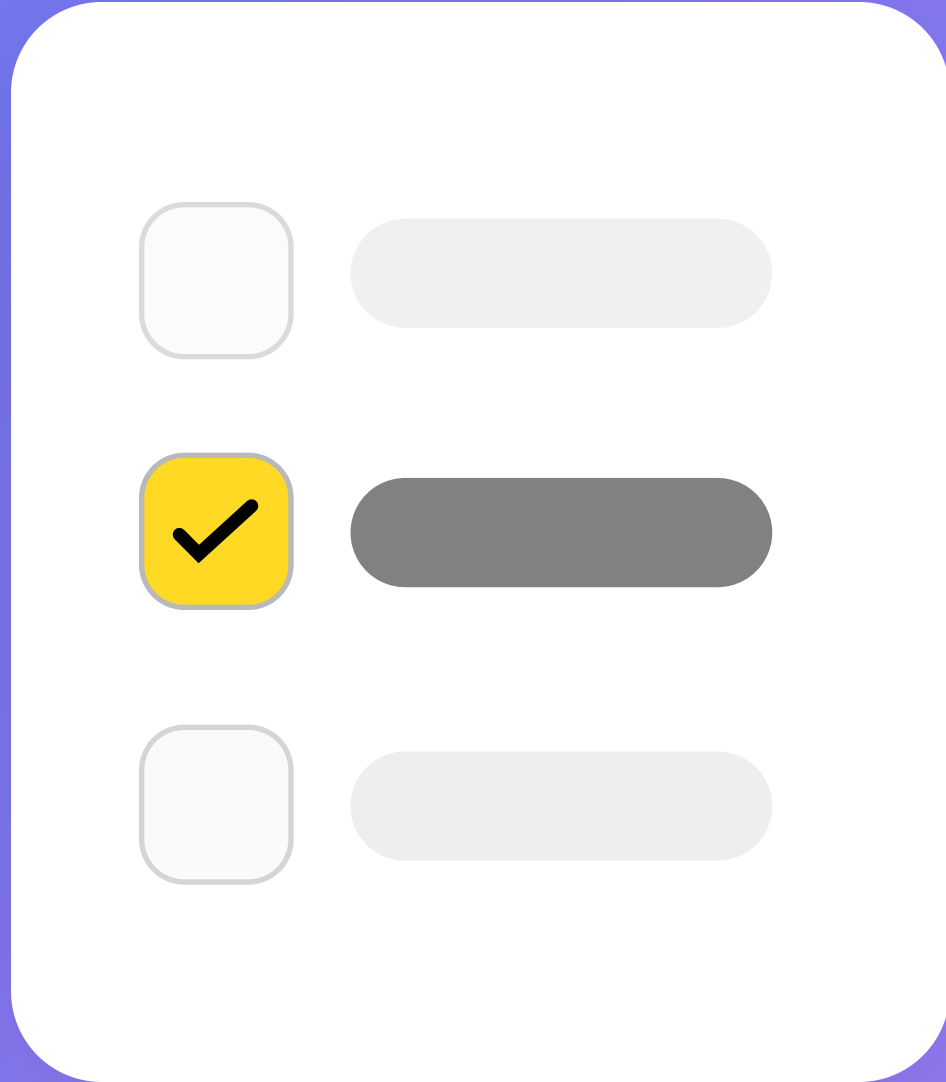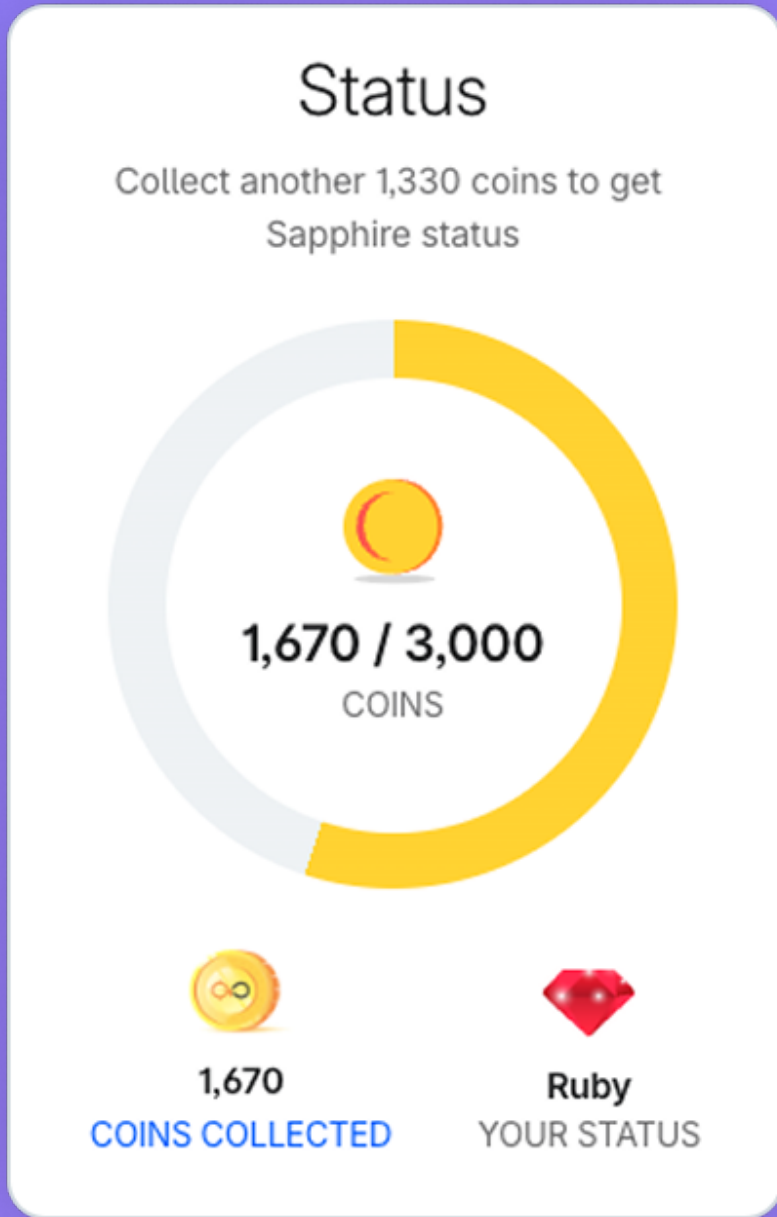
3 **Gamified reinforcement**

Incorporating gamification elements — such as points, badges, or progress tracking — can boost learner engagement by 13–39%, particuarly in asynchronous learning environments.

Status

Collect another 1,330 coins to get Sapphire status

1,670 / 3,000
COINS

1,670
COINS COLLECTED

Ruby
YOUR STATUS

From power skills to data skills and more

In 2025, technical fluency and human "power skills" no longer operate in separate lanes — they converge into a single path toward data-driven decision-making. Our data reveals that when prospects express interest in Power BI training, they consistently mention Excel as well. This signals a clear trend: learners are eager to upskill gradually and build on the tools they already know.

Why this journey matters

"
48% of American workers say they would switch to a new job if it offered them skills training opportunities.
"

1

Employee retention

Employees increasingly expect their employers to invest in learning and development. In fact, eLearning Industry indicates a strong link between upskilling and employee retention.

2

Business moves on numbers

From budget approvals and customer dashboards to diversity, equity, & inclusion (DEI) targets, today's decisions are powered by data storytelling. Excel is the on-ramp. Most teams already live in spreadsheets; it's the fastest way to teach formulas, logic, and basic data analysis. Add business intelligence tools, and that impact grows exponentially.

An implementation blueprint

Let us consider a practical example of how developing both technical and non-technical skills can be cultivated to align with business goals.

Take Excel — a tool known not just for spreadsheets, but for developing analytical thinking. Regular use trains the brain to break down complex tasks, approach problems methodically, and create repeatable, time-saving processes. These same habits are essential for working effectively with AI.

Why? Because even the best AI tools rely on clear, strategic prompts. If a user doesn't understand what insights the data could reveal, they won't know the right questions to ask, and the output will fall short. Strong analytical skills lead to better AI results.

Goal	Strategy	GoSkills tools
Build data and leadership skills	Build a data & leadership skills ladder, e.g., Excel – Basic & Advanced → Power BI → Generative AI Prompt Writing for Beginners → Copilot for Microsoft 365 → Time Management & Productivity Set passmark to 80%	• Built-in course library • Learning paths
Achieve 60% weekly active learners	Set a team target, e.g., earn 2,000 points per week, to exert positive peer pressure.	• Gamification engine • Team leaderboards
Make learning job-relevant	Encourage learners to use a virtual tutor for learning support. Ask learners for course feedback and suggestions.	• AI tutor • Customizable course feedback forms

The shifting L&D landscape

In response to growing demand for easily digestible, customized content, GoSkills became the <u>first learning platform</u> to offer generative course authoring back in April 2023. Tools like <u>Genie</u> are now becoming more commonplace among elearning providers. Today, training managers, instructional designers, and SMEs can use this technology directly within their LMS to:

• Brainstorm course outlines
• Automatically generate quizzes
• Transform PDFs into interactive courses

Large language models like ChatGPT and Claude are already changing the way people learn, and the next evolution is here. Imagine an AI tutor embedded directly within a course module: ready to simplify complex content, respond to learner questions in real time, and even build personalized learning schedules in multiple languages. No need to switch platforms. No disruption to the learning flow.

This kind of intelligent, in-the-moment support addresses one of the biggest challenges in L&D today: learner engagement. HR leaders are tasked with implementing training solutions that spark curiosity, drive course completion, and turn learners into advocates. When they do, upskilling accelerates, and the ROI of learning becomes unmistakably clear.

GoSkills Genie

✕

Course topic and audience

Which industry or field is this course for?

Quick-service restaurants / food service

Who will be taking this course?

McDonald's franchise owners and restaurant managers

What is the skill level?

Beginner ⌄

What is your course about?

Sustainability and Purpose-Driven Strategy in Quick-Service Restaurants (QSR).

Knowledge files (optional)
Help Genie understand your course objectives by uploading relevant background information.

Note: Uncheck a file if you do not want to include it in this task.

✓ McDonalds_PurposeImpact_ProgressReport_2022_2023-compresse... 🗑

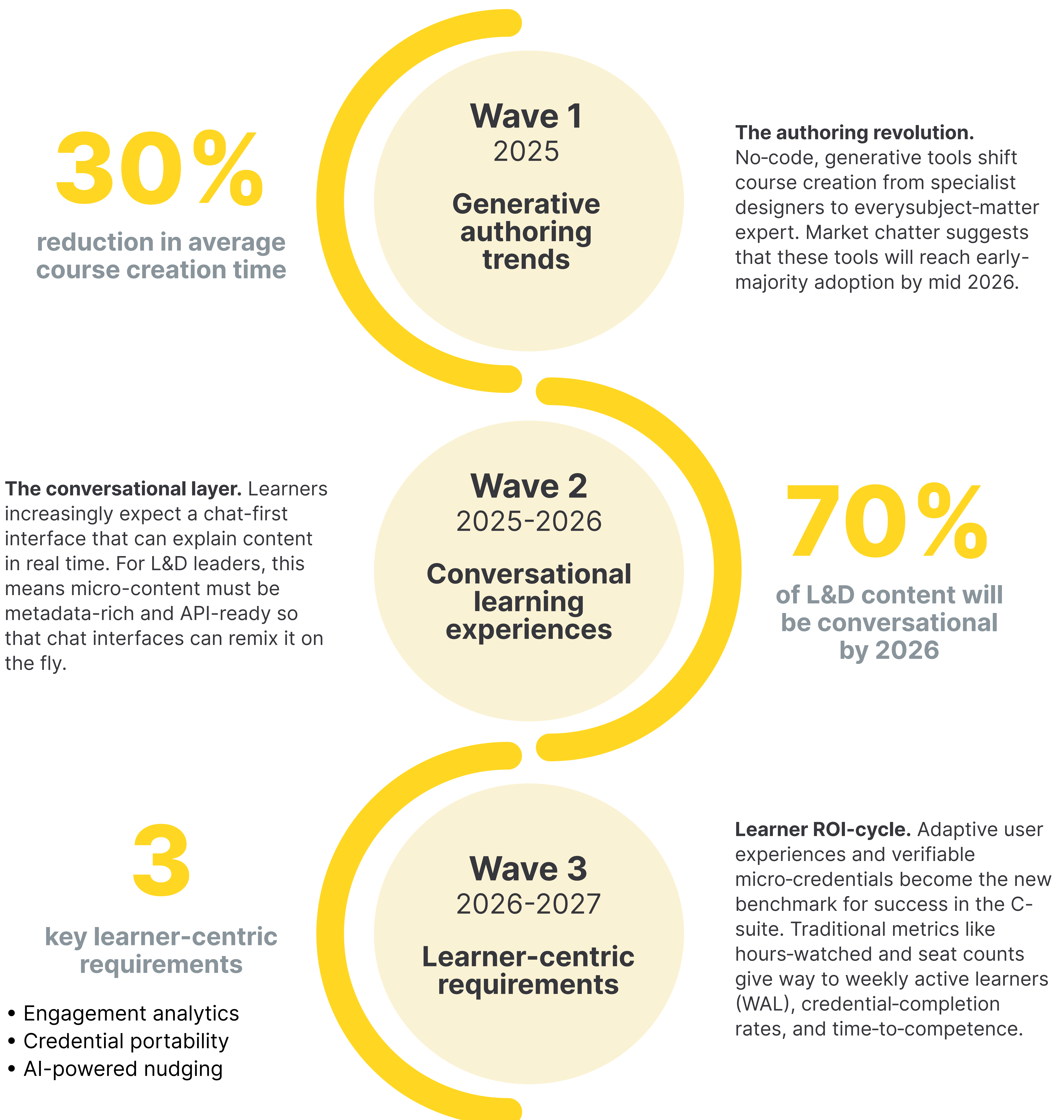Add a file   ⓘ

Generate overview

2025-2027 L&D prediction matrix

L&D technology	Current penetration	2027 prediction
AI course authoring	45%	75%
Chat-based help for learners	30%	80%
Engagement-powered ROI dashboards	10%	40%

Bottom line: By 2027, elearning will be dominated by chat-based experiences created at near-zero marginal cost — personalized, interactive, and deeply integrated with learner-centric engagement metrics that tie directly to business KPIs. Organizations that delay risk falling behind, accumulating a skills debt that compounds faster than they can hire.

L&D outlook: 2025-2027

GoSkills predicts that the next 36 months will compress a decade's worth of learning-tech innovation into three mutually reinforcing waves.

Wave 1
2025
Generative authoring trends

30%
reduction in average course creation time

The authoring revolution. No-code, generative tools shift course creation from specialist designers to everysubject-matter expert. Market chatter suggests that these tools will reach early-majority adoption by mid 2026.

Wave 2
2025-2026
Conversational learning experiences

The conversational layer. Learners increasingly expect a chat-first interface that can explain content in real time. For L&D leaders, this means micro-content must be metadata-rich and API-ready so that chat interfaces can remix it on the fly.

70%
of L&D content will be conversational by 2026

Wave 3
2026-2027
Learner-centric requirements

3
key learner-centric requirements

- Engagement analytics
- Credential portability
- AI-powered nudging

Learner ROI-cycle. Adaptive user experiences and verifiable micro-credentials become the new benchmark for success in the C-suite. Traditional metrics like hours-watched and seat counts give way to weekly active learners (WAL), credential-completion rates, and time-to-competence.

How leading teams are responding

Wave 1 is already in motion. Virtually every LMS provider now offers generative course creation capabilities, whether natively or with integrations, and instructional designers are quickly embracing the shift.

But GoSkills is ahead of the curve on both Wave 1 and Wave 2. By the time conversational learning reaches mass adoption, GoSkills users will already be measuring learner progress against real business outcomes like productivity, revenue, and strategic KPIs. That means they won't just be prepared for Wave 3 — they'll be positioned to lead it. With measurable skill progression tied to real business outcomes, GoSkills customers will have a clear head start while others are still catching up.

Organizations and teams that have partnered with us have seen tangible benefits in the form of:

- Increased learner engagement
- Higher training completion
- Faster time-to-competence

> "When people know their jobs better, they're happier in them and more satisfied overall. We've boosted our employees' abilities to implement their own initiatives and apply their skills at work because they now have the necessary tools."

Paul Dawson
Former People Initiative Senior Strategist at Balsam Brands

BALSAM
BRANDS

> "With Genie, I don't have to wait for information to be built from scratch. I can easily generate a course outline and lesson content using this AI tool and involve people from other areas to review and edit the information accordingly. It's more of a review-based support system now."

Jamica Baker
HR Manager of Workforce Training and Development at Hampton Roads Transit

HAMPTON ROADS
T R A N S I T

go skills

Explore your next steps

GoSkills brings together bite-sized content, AI-powered course creation, gamification, and robust analytics in one SOC-2-compliant platform. Teams launch in hours, not months, with learners who are actually excited and motivated to grow their skills.
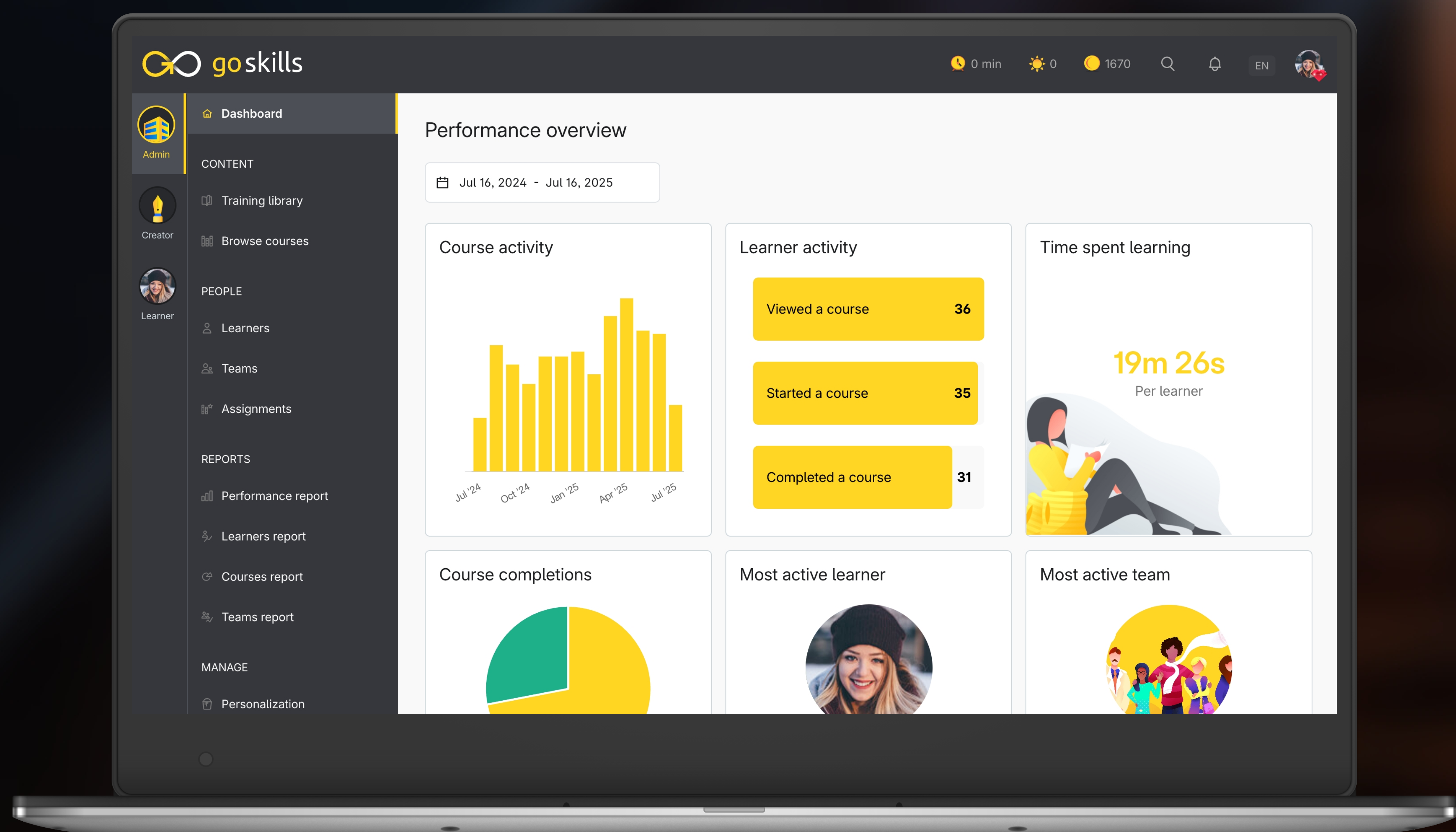
A team that's highly qualified, with a passion for learning and a can-do attitude gets things done. That's who we are.

About GoSkills

GoSkills equips over 500,000 learners and 10,000 organizations worldwide with the skills they need, delivered in micro-modules that fit the flow of work.

Curious what's possible for your team? Book a no-obligation strategy call — we'd love to show you.

Tell us about your training goals

Learn more at goskills.com