



Openside

End of Year Report

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Summary of the Key Themes

Based on information from Openside Technology and Programme data, the Openside End of Year Report looked at the learning landscape in Professional Services and those organisations wanting to develop advisory-led skills. We analysed attendees, learning content, delivery methods, plus learning impact assessment data.

The key themes that emerged are:

- Measuring the return on investment in training
- Cost implications for non-attendance
- The shift back to in-person from online
- Middle Management training investment





Return on Investment in Training

In 2006, [David Maister](#) argued that "the majority of business training is a waste of money and time, because only a microscopic fraction of training is ever put into practice and the hoped-for benefits obtained."

Almost a decade later, [research](#) suggested his assertion remained worryingly pertinent.

['The Openside Approach'](#) is designed to ensure that any training initiative or intervention is aligned with the strategic intent of the organisation and that the 'scrap' components of any training interventions ('scrap' learning being the elements of training that have no relevance to current or future roles) are minimised.

[Vienna](#), is the first fully digital learning measurement tool designed for professional services firms and roles. It enables collection of diagnostic data to check that after any training intervention, participants are given both the time and opportunity to apply new skills acquired in the context of their role, and proof points needed to support career progression.

According to a [LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report](#), "94% of employees say they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their learning and development." In 2024, when Vienna was used before and 3 months after the programme, attendees stayed with the firm 10 months longer than colleagues not using Vienna. There was a 35% increase in the number of programme attendees using Vienna digital learning assessment in 2024.





Cost Implications of Missed Training

A key, but often overlooked, issue is the cost of 'no-shows'. There is a significant cost in terms of fees, time and opportunity cost.

Fewer attendees on the same L&D budgeted programme means there is an equivalent cost per head increase. In one firm where Principals/VPs did not attend the whole programme, it equated to a 29% increase, plus the unseen cost of disruption to other learners during the programme. Additional administrative hours were also incurred in rescheduling, cancelling and/or postponing.

Catch-up sessions, when available, resulted in additional programme costs in management consulting and technology consulting clients of between 12% and 29% of the original programme value.

Role/Level	Sector	Programme Type	% increase in actual cost per head rate because of non-attendance
Junior	Management Consulting	Consulting Skills Development	17%
Middle Management	Management Consulting	Advisory-Led Business Development	7%
Middle Management	Technology Consulting	Consulting Skills Development	11%
Middle Management	Management Consulting	Consulting Skills Development	23%
Senior Leader	Management Consulting	Consulting Skills Development	62%
Senior Leader	Management Consulting	Partner Development	8%
Senior Leader	Management Consulting	Route to Partner	30%

Fig 1. Illustrative Management Consulting and Technology Consulting cost per head increase because of non-attendance.

We always encourage client sponsors and senior leaders to reinforce the value of role-related, non-technical professional development and ask participants for their commitment to attend and engage fully for the entire programme. Non-attendance is considerably reduced when strong Senior sponsorship is present.



The Shift Back to In-Person from Online



There has been a definite shift from 2023 to 2024 in programme delivery methods. Learning and Development teams tell us:

- Online allows them to connect disparate offices
- It reduces costs as training expenditure is being cut
- It is more efficient as people do not have to spend time travelling to programmes.

However, participants, without exception, tell us that they consider in-person programmes more effective. (Consulting Skills, Partner Development, Business Development, Communicating Insights and Storytelling programmes.) Our experience is that whilst participants were very tolerant of online training during Covid, that tolerance is fast disappearing. The idea that people from different geographic locations will build relationships online is overestimated. We believe that senior programmes, in particular, should not be delivered online. Virtual delivery is still effective for technical content but much less so for the acquisition of 'softer' behavioural skills.

Based on what L&D teams were telling us, we were curious to explore the training investment by role/level and delivery method. Our data for all virtual programmes showed that the increase in virtual delivery hours in 2024 was entirely for middle management (99.6%) across consulting skills, business development and storytelling/communication.



Middle Management Training Investment

Top programmes 2024 vs 2023

In 2024, the usual training investment in middle management shifted from programmes around the transition to the manager role and additional responsibilities, to better communication, storytelling, and presentation skills with clients and internal stakeholders.

Managers on our programmes describe the intense pressure they face in their role, as they deal with demanding clients, stakeholders, teams and Directors. Many attendees from Technology and Consulting were expected to fit virtual training around their 60-hour working week. We note the degree to which training for mid-level managers/experienced hires has shifted to online. However, the skills demanded of a junior to mid-level manager are complex and interpersonally demanding, reflecting their increasingly complex and demanding roles, and face-to face training has much more impact than virtual.





The Openside Approach

Openside designs and delivers professional development programmes that strengthen the core behavioural, cognitive and analytical skills, essential for success in consulting, professional or advisory roles, aiding organisations and employees in reaching their full potential. We believe that our team have trained more management consultants in behavioural and cognitive skills worldwide than any other firm over the last 30 years.

All our programmes are meticulously designed to integrate experiential learning (explanation, debate and discussion, modelling, role-playing and coaching), and best practices, tools and methodologies with the most recent behavioural science research and are delivered by programme leaders who have, or have had, senior roles in professional services firms. We employ innovative learning to achieve significant outcomes with our [Vienna](#) platform, specifically tailored for the client, it gathers critical feedback from participants and assesses the actual impact of training programmes on organisational performance. Vienna uses advanced survey models and intuitive data visualisations to provide actionable insights into workplace training, clearly demonstrating a direct return on investment for our clients.

Recognising the diverse needs of our clients, Openside offers a flexible learning approach. In addition to in-person programmes, we provide high-quality [eLearning](#) solutions to accommodate various budgets and learning styles. Furthermore, we are excited to announce the launch of our new [Client Portal](#) in 2025, a centralised hub where our alumni can easily access programme information, receive ongoing support, and explore resources to further their career development.

Openside offers a compelling value proposition. Our focus on client outcomes, combined with our exceptional team, innovative technology, and flexible learning solutions, empowers individuals and organisations to achieve sustainable success:

- Support in mapping L&D needs to professional needs at each career milestone.
- We understand Professional Services – the challenges, demands and learning needs at each level.



The Openside Group is the leading provider of executive development, training, coaching and advisory, to professional services firms.

If you would like to know more about how Openside work with our Clients to develop the essential cognitive and behavioural skills required for success, we would be delighted to speak with you.



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