



illumeo 2018 Survey
Of Professional
Development for
Audit, Accounting &
Corporate Finance

Reflecting on the current state
of professional development
needs and solutions



Who Is This Data For?

According to the [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), 13% of all jobs in the country are in audit, accounting, finance and related positions.

So, who cares about professional development for these folks? Well, just about all 15 million or so of these people themselves, and the nearly 1,000,000 HR, L&D and related workers supporting them.

They care about this because these people are frequently among the highest paid employees with some of the greatest responsibilities at any company. Their duties include managing corporate financial transactions, financial reporting, financial analysis, budgeting, forecasting, auditing, credit and collections, finance operations, etc..

Any company would cease to function more-or-less immediately without these folks, and their job skills are critical to the continued success of virtually every organization. Their continuing professional development is, likewise, critical.

Thus, this data is of interest to anyone who cares about the quality and ongoing development of employees in these roles.

What's interesting, as you will find in the numbers below, is that these employees frequently have to fend for themselves when it comes to professional development, for some rather unusual reasons we'll opine on later.

Executive Summary of the Survey

There were over 400 respondents, primarily from large companies (defined as 2,000+ employees), in all major industries, and from all primary functions within audit, accounting and finance.

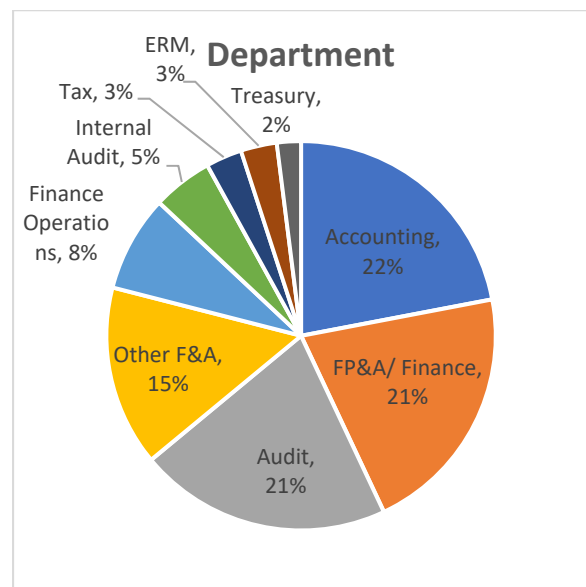
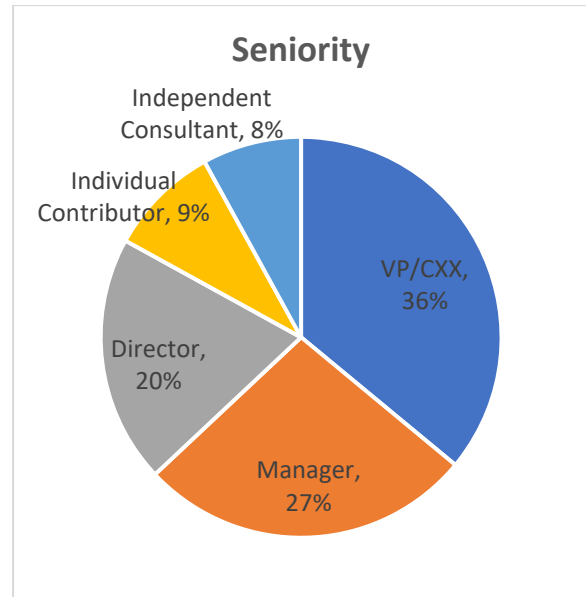
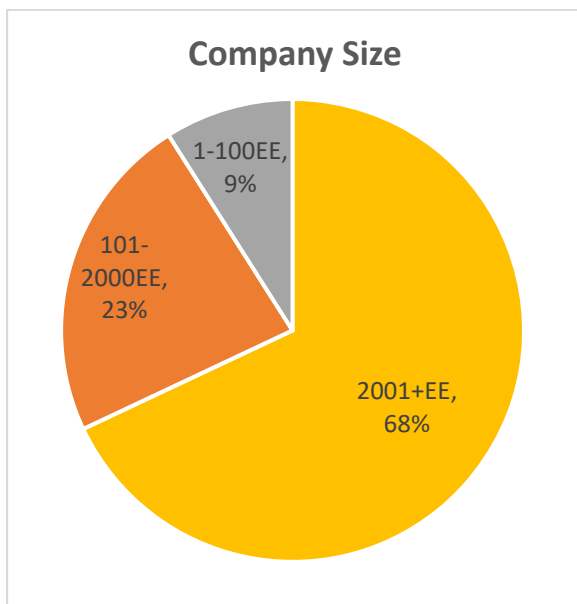
The top line results are that training is important to the vast majority of these professionals. Be it for

themselves or for their direct reports, it's clear that continuing professional development, and its attendant CPE credit for certified professionals like CPAs and CMAs, is a high priority.

What is equally clear from the data is that most of the respondents' companies do not provide sufficient functional training nor CPE, and that these people are going outside of HR, L&D and corporate learning systems in order to find that training and CPE - and at a very high cost in dollars, time and effort.

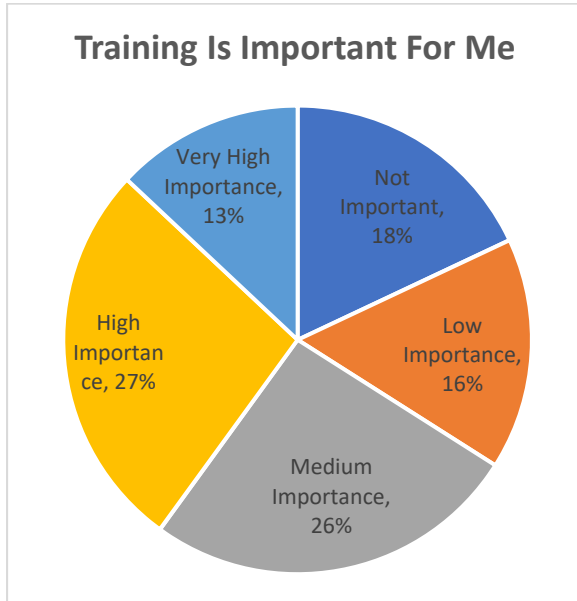
Participants' Profile

N=411 total survey participants

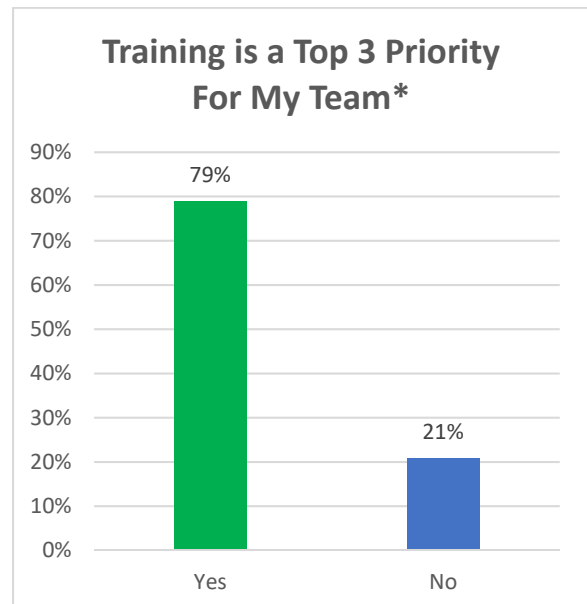
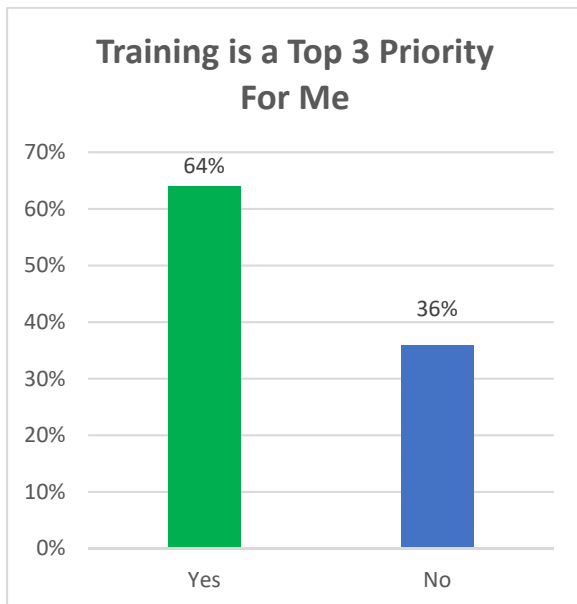
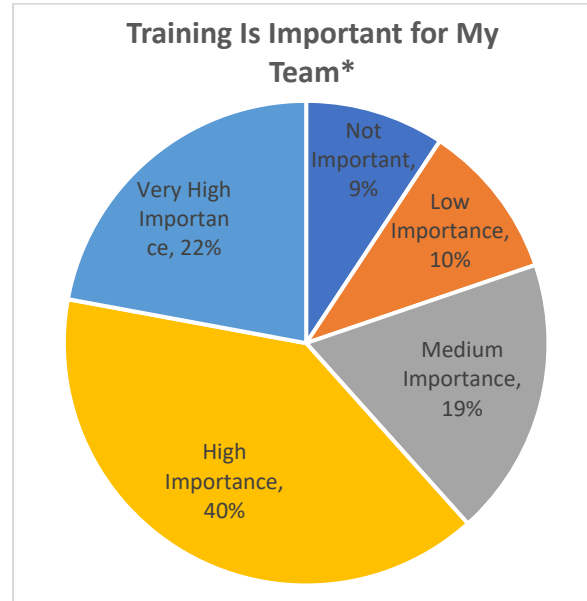


More than 400 participants added their data to Illumeo's 2018 Audit, Accounting and Corporate Finance Professional Development survey. The majority of those were large company corporate finance and accounting professionals, along with significant representation from audit and assurance professionals and support groups typically reporting in to a company's CFO organization.

Training Priority for the Respondent

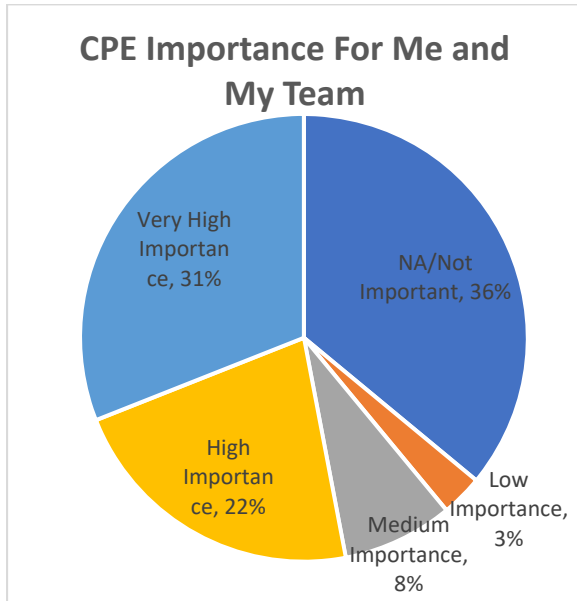


Training Priority for Respondent's Team



Where noted throughout this paper, responses of "N/A", mostly due to a small number of respondents not having people report to them, are omitted from the results marked with an asterisk () with the remaining percentages rebalanced to equal 100 percent.

CPE Priority



CPE (Continuing Professional Education) importance is an interesting topic. There is a large chunk of “NA/Not Important” due mostly to the fact that many audit, accounting and finance professionals do not have credentials requiring CPE. The most popular CPE credentials are the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) and its global equivalent, the CA (Chartered Accountant). There are many other certification types requiring CPE/CE, such as CMAs, CIAs, CFEs and a litany of others.

To a large number of the holders of these certifications, many of which take years and tens of thousands of dollars to acquire, they are their most important professional asset. Increasingly, a CPA or other specialty designation is the very reason someone *did* get hired. And, thus, maintaining that certification, with its annual CPE requirement, is paramount.

Likewise, many managers value having these certified professionals on their team because they bring the very skills their certifications represent. Those skills provide the manager with an assurance that their employee has the requisite capabilities their position demands.

Frequently these days we are hearing from entire organizations that are prioritizing the acquisition and maintenance of specialty certifications as a way to ensure their employees have certain skills and, as a result, can improve corporate performance and reduce operating risk at the same time.

Cost of Training



Note that we asked for estimated, direct cost of training activity, which includes the cost of the training plus, for “live” training, any associated cost of travel (T&E). These are good faith estimates which we did not audit. That said, given that the respondents are primarily audit, finance and accounting professionals, we believe their estimates to at least be directional and certainly valuable for drawing conclusions when aggregated. If anything, our experience has shown that most managers underestimate their total spend on professional development.

Interestingly, although training is noted as more important for the team than for the team’s leader (the respondent in most of our data), the cost of training for the team leader is slightly higher. This is likely due to a higher percentage of trainings aimed at senior leaders being “live”, and thus more costly in terms of entry fees and related T&E expense.

There are a surprising (to us) number of managers who spend not only nothing on their own training, but also on their people’s training. Some of that will be owing to particular budgetary realities for some companies, but certainly in some cases also due to the priorities of the managers themselves for training and its importance relative to their particular workforce.

In a quick Google search for “live” (offsite) trainings in finance and accounting, common pricing ran from \$500 to \$2,000 per day of training, and multi-day trainings were very available and broad. T&E cost for a round-trip flight and one nights’ stay can run from \$500 to \$1,000, and higher for multi-night stays and to reach certain locales.

Researched costs for live, client-site-delivered training ran from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per day (and occasionally more), frequently with consultant T&E added on top of the class delivery fee. Sometimes costs were related to the number of

learners and other times they were flat fees regardless of the number of learners.

Finally, the cost for purely ‘online’ training ran from as low as \$10 for a single online course to well over \$500 for annual course and CPE subscriptions.

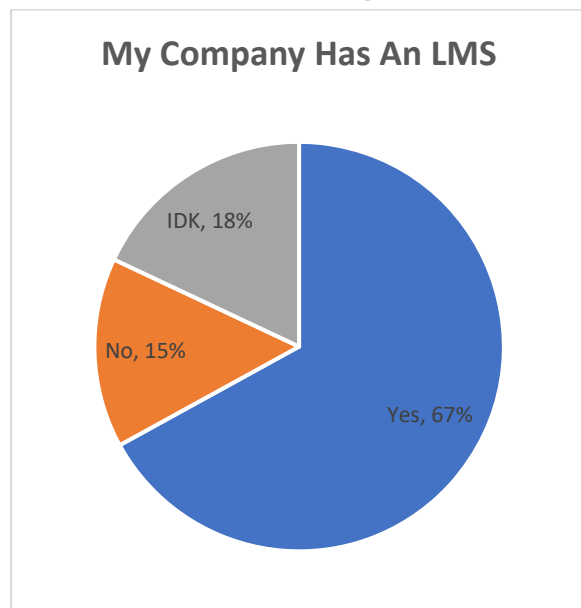
We would add the cost of the company’s LMS here but, as we found and will shortly show in the data, these systems are rarely used for functional learning or CPE in corporate organizations, and thus their cost as used by these organizations should be primarily counted in the budget for regulatory training such as ‘Harassment Prevention’ and similar, mandated trainings, not for functional training or CPE.

If we put in some hard number estimates, such as \$0 for the “\$0” entries, and then a midpoint value for the ‘ranges’, such as \$1,000 for the range “\$501 to \$1,500”, and a value of \$5,000 to represent an average for the “\$4,000+” values, we can begin to get a feel for actual spending here. And the math shows an average of \$2,085 per year on the respondent’s training expense, and \$1,945 per year for each of their team members’ training expense.

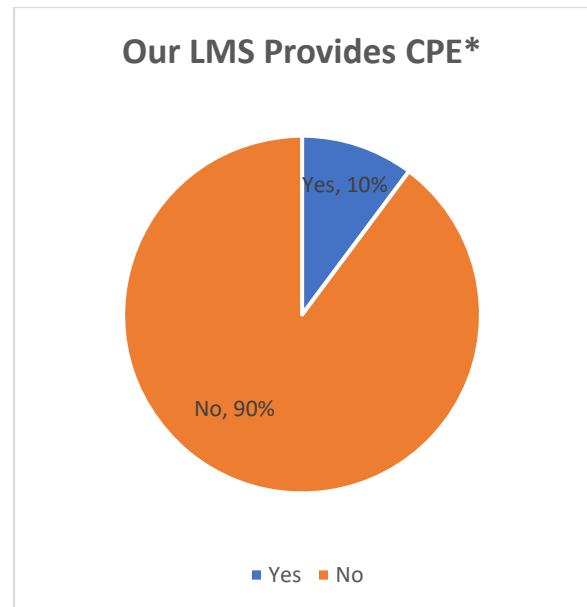
To put that into some perspective, if a typical large enterprise has 5,000 employees, and 3% of those are in audit, accounting and/or finance, and we use an average of \$2,000/person/year in functional training and CPE expense, that means \$300,000 is being spent, on average, on training and CPE for the organization.

Companies with greater or fewer employees can adjust accordingly. Note that small companies tend to spend far less in training per employee, but since there were very few small companies in our sample, we presume the results for mid- and large-sized companies should be in this neighborhood, on average, but with team-by-team and company-by-company variances as noted by the spending spreads in this very data.

Company-Provided Functional Training and CPE



Assuming the “IDK” or, “I Don’t Know” contingent has a similar “yes/no” distribution to those who did know the answer here, we would say that the split of companies having an LMS is roughly 80% “have” to 20% “don’t have”. This is not surprising given the propensity for LMSs at large companies.



*Here again we removed “N/A” results for those who did not know whether their companies have an LMS or whether they have functional learning content and rebalanced the remaining results to equal 100%.

We did not define the word “Useful” to the respondents, but would rely on a traditional definition meaning, “able to be used for a practical purpose”. What these two graphs demonstrate is that the respondents by and large did not think that their companies’ LMSs provided useful functional learning content nor CPE.

What would “useful” mean here to someone in an accounting, audit or finance organization? Based on our experience with and in those organizations, we would say that such training would have to be of sufficient breadth and depth to be meaningfully helpful to those who are already CPAs, MBAs, and the like. That is, it would need to be training sufficient to usefully train those who are already somewhere between conversant and expert in a number of finance, accounting and audit areas. This is a very high bar to cross and explains why most generic LMS ‘course libraries’ don’t do the trick.

Conclusions

So, what does it all mean? Well, there are no surprises here at all for those who have spent decades in audit, accounting and corporate finance: with a few exceptions, training and CPE are vitally important for these people, and most companies don't provide the needed training or CPE credit internally.

In follow-up interviews with respondents, it was clear that they (mostly managers and senior executive leaders) and their direct reports spent a lot more time than they wanted finding the training and CPE that both they and their employees need.

It was also clear that in many cases their HR/L&D support either did not understand their particular needs or did not know how to fulfill their needs. This led to these organizations relying more and more on their own training research efforts and less and less on those provided by their companies over time.

What can be done?

There are not many corporate training platforms that provide deep, functional learning and CPE at enterprise scale. However, they do exist, and audit, accounting and finance leaders can find them with some research. Likewise, HR/L&D can find them and, after ascertaining their employee's needs in these areas, can provide them just as easily and economically as they provide regulatory training across their companies today.

By doing so, all will be saving significant dollars for their companies and a tremendous amount of time for the employees and leaders who currently waste both whilst trying to source their own training, one training and one employee at-a-time.

ABOUT ILLUMEO

Illumeo is the LMS for CPE.

Incorporated in 2009 and based in Silicon Valley, CA. The platform is used at small, mid-sized, and many of the largest companies in the world.

Illumeo's instructors are respected senior practitioners in their fields, and they build top quality courses accessible through the cloud-based Illumeo platform on any web-connected device.

Illumeo helps corporate functional leaders and HR/L&D professionals serve their employees and, critically, bring their learning onto corporate systems where their efforts can be measured and reported, while at the same time offering significant cost savings through improved visibility and control over their training spend.

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