

Employee Training Trends on the Horizon



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The training industry is one that sees changes in methodology and technology constantly. Some organizations are quick to pick up on new trends and try them out, while others prefer to wait and see which ones survive the test of time and prove their value. Wherever your organization lies on that spectrum, what's clear is that you'll have to embrace change if your business is going to stay competitive in the modern era.

The world of work is constantly shifting, so smart and successful companies keep an eye on the training trends that are going to work best for their employees and create that coveted competitive advantage. Training in the 21st century takes the root objective of filling skills gaps and creating behavior change and extends it to teaching the workforce how to quickly learn and adapt. This happens when organizations look at training as a full learning experience - one that goes beyond the classroom and is in large part self-directed by employees themselves.

"Workforce learning is not about courses, it's about the entire learning experience and how we build competencies and skills unique to the individual."

- Doug Harward and Ken Taylor, Training Industry, Inc.

In this ebook, we'll look at some of the top trends that are continuing to prove important for workplace learning, along with those that have a lot of potential to impact the way way we train in the coming years.

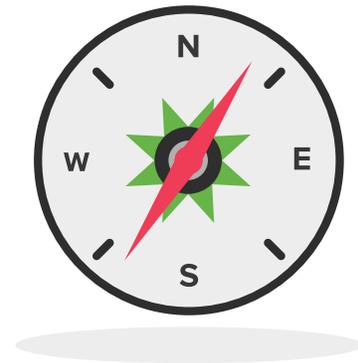


Self-Directed Learning

Engaging employees in training has long been a struggle for trainers, so the newest trends in training are often focused on methods that promote a more personalized experience. When people see how learning applies to their personal and professional development, engagement skyrockets, allowing learners to understand the learning objectives and apply them at a much higher rate.

The benefits of providing self-directed learning are far-reaching and have a huge impact on business challenges like agility, employee retention, skill gaps, and productivity, just to name a few.

Many organizations have already seen the benefits of providing self-directed learning opportunities to their workforce, but many others still have a long way to go when it comes to providing the modern learning that employees actually find engaging and effective. More and more people expect their employer to invest in online, on-demand learning for a wide variety of topics.



As a modern learner, they're looking for professional development to harness their strengths and quench their curiosity.

In a recent survey conducted by Brandon Hall and BizLibrary, when asked to rank the effectiveness of different learning modalities, administrators ranked instructor-led training highest, while learners ranked on-the-job learning highest. Employees recognize that they learn better outside the classroom. However, organizations have been prone to focus more on the administrative side of training, rather than the learning experience itself, which has hurt their ability to engage employees in learning and developing their skills. The survey also showed that while organizations are getting better at delivering training through a blended approach, their ratio of formal vs. informal learning is still heavy on the traditional, classroom style.

The good news is that the technology available for online and on-the-job training is now widely accessible for organizations, making it easier to appease both administrators and learners with online learning solutions that fit their separate needs.

According to research by Capterra, of LMS buyers who switched from a previous system, 66 percent "did so because their previous LMS didn't have all the features they required, indicating buyers are seeking more customizable and feature-rich solutions."

Microlearning

Using microlearning as a format for teaching and training is not a new trend, but in recent years it has become much more accessible for organizations to use at scale, thanks to advancing software and online solutions. Instructional designers, training experts, and microlearning vendors often have different interpretations of what defines microlearning, but one thing they all agree on is that the effectiveness of this format guarantees its continuance in training programs for years to come.

At its heart, microlearning is designing learning to be delivered in short bursts. The issue of exactly how short something has to be in order to be considered “micro” has often been debated, but the point is to not overwhelm the learner with too much information at a time. Studies have found that when this applies to video, less than ten minutes is an optimal amount of time for training on a single concept. When a subject requires more time than that, it should be strategically broken down into small lessons – throwing everything at the learner at once puts too much cognitive load on the brain, blocking a large part of the information from being absorbed.

On top of the fact that it makes sense from a neuroscience standpoint, microlearning has proven to be massively helpful for providing training in the moment of need. When employees are working, they need access to on-demand, to-the-point content that helps them continue with their jobs. In those moments, neither they nor your business can afford waiting for a class.

This is why curated, microlearning libraries, like The BizLibrary Collection, have become so popular. They provide an easy way for employees to fit learning into busy schedules, whether they’re looking for a particular topic, or browsing for different skills and topics that could help them improve in their roles.

Video-based Training

This is another trend that has been around for years but has recently exploded in popularity and isn’t going away anytime soon. Video-based training has benefited from the one-two punch of microlearning making the most sense for modern learners, along with advancements in video production technology making this format more ubiquitous than ever.



What’s important for employers to remember as they look for video content is how the use of video fits into an overall training program. While YouTube is a fantastic source of instruction on tons of topics, there’s no built-in process to ensure the information employees find there is accurate, and it doesn’t include built in tools to reinforce the learning. Organizations that understand how to integrate video into a blended training program know that curated content from experts and post-training reinforcement are two very important aspects of video-based training.

Any employee training content library worth its salt must have a solid method of ensuring the video content is kept up-to-date, along with providing advanced filters and recommended videos to make it easy to find the right content. Beyond the video content itself, top providers recognize the importance of having employees engage with what they’ve learned through follow up quizzes and questions to help them retain and apply training on the job.

Post-Training Reinforcement

When it comes to schooling, tests are a standard part of reviewing what was learned in class. With employee training, though, taking measures to reinforce learning has not been nearly as commonplace as in schools. With technology continuing to move learning outside of a classroom and allowing more self-directed training opportunities, it's even easier to learn a lot and remember very little of it. Without post-training reinforcement methods in place, a large percentage of that valuable learning will be forgotten immediately after training.

Professor Henry Roediger at Washington University in St. Louis has done extensive research on learning reinforcement, and his findings demonstrate that forced recall is the best way to help learners retain information in the long run. Dr. Roediger's research shows that studying and absorbing information alone is ineffective for retaining it long-term, and that providing questions spaced out over time to test understanding of the information results in dramatically higher learning retention rates. In one study comparing studying against testing, those that were given tests instead of reviewing the information again showed **42% higher retention after a week!**

Organizations that invest in training but don't incorporate learning reinforcement strategies are watching the majority of that investment get flushed away by the human brain's natural memory processes.

Luckily, more and more training professionals are finding aid from new technologies, such as BoosterLearn, to help them automate post-training reinforcement for both formal and informal training.

Emphasis on Soft Skills

The focus for many employee training programs has typically been on the technical skills and competencies employees need to succeed in a job role. However, it's becoming abundantly clear that training programs can't afford to overlook the skills crucial to collaboration and innovation. For businesses to stay competitive, and for employees to develop in their careers, soft skills training has to have a seat at the table.



In "The Future of Jobs" report from the World Economic Forum, they've predicted that by 2020, more than one third of the skill sets considered most critical will be those that weren't considered critical just a few years ago - such as emotional intelligence and persuasion. A joint survey from Chief Learning Officer and American Public University, "2017 Learning Priorities," found that organizations are increasing budgets and placing the highest training priority on leadership development initiatives - with communication, feedback, and employee engagement identified as the most critical areas. In other words, soft skills training is in high demand, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.

Where many training programs have struggled with soft skills is how to measure the impact and return on investment. It may be easy to recognize when someone is either strong or lacking in a particular skill, but measuring whether they've reached a sufficient level of competency to make a difference can prove more difficult. When it comes to measuring ROI with soft skills training, learning professionals will have to take a different approach than they do with technical skills.

To learn different methods and calculations for this, check out the ebook, **“Evaluating the Impact of Soft Skills Training in Your Organization.”**

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Rising Trends in New Technology

In terms of technology, we've already reviewed some widely adopted methods, and now want to take a look at a few trends that are gaining momentum and being incorporated into some workplace training programs at varying degrees.

Adaptive Learning

The spirit of adaptive learning is a focus on personalizing training experiences to individual learners. What that actually looks like can range from using recommendation engines and curated learning paths to having courses adapt themselves based on learner feedback as they progress through a course. Built-in algorithms can take into account multiple factors (such as speed, confidence, and accuracy), measured by having the learner respond to questions throughout the course.

Training administrators can give people ideas for training to take based on their job roles or departments, but within that training, an adaptive algorithm would take the personalization a step further by:



Tracking data, like topics taken and quiz answers after each video or course



Evaluating that information against pre-programmed benchmarks for the training



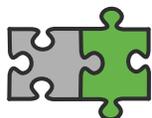
Automatically adapting the training that comes next with subject matter, difficulty, delivery, and more, adjusted based on the data

Tracking the skills people already have and then providing learning opportunities that are tailored to improving those skills allows employees to become experts in their field much faster than traditional, classroom-based training. That customization will not only make training less time-consuming, but it'll make it more engaging when an individual is constantly challenged to learn the skills relevant to their job now, and where their career is headed in the future.

Gamification

Games have long been known to be beneficial for learning, but “fun and games” would rarely be the term used to describe an employee training program. However, using technology to gamify training courses is beginning to be more widely accepted and adopted.

Adding elements of games is beneficial for many reasons, which often include increased engagement in training, motivation to act on what is being learned, friendly competition to engage teams, and the sense of achievement it brings learners. In an article with eLearning Industry, Asha Pandey identifies common elements of gamification as:



CHALLENGES

Mapping to learning objectives



LEVELS

Learning path



INSTANT FEEDBACK

To aid progress



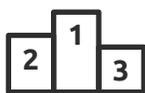
SCORES OR POINTS

To impart a sense of accomplishment and gratification



BADGES

For significant achievements



LEADERBOARDS

For analytics



COMPETITION

To assess where the learner stands against his/her peers



COLLABORATION

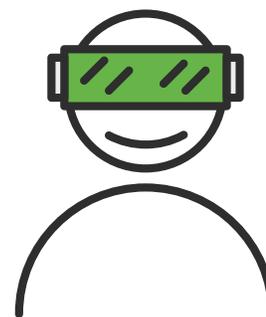
When multiple teams play

Using the psychology of playing games has been proven to facilitate better learning retention. That's why so many companies are exploring the various options for engaging their employees in training through making it more competitive – whether that's with themselves or with their colleagues.

Augmented and Virtual Reality

The technology enabling both augmented and virtual reality for training and use at work is growing at a rapid pace. Since augmented reality layers information over the existing reality, and virtual reality creates a simulated environment, there is a wide variety of ways to apply this technology in different work situations.

Augmented reality has been showing up in movies and games for some time – think *Minority Report*, *Iron Man*, or *Pokemon GO*. Augmented is typically more easily accessible than virtual, since it can be accessed with only a smartphone, while virtual reality requires more equipment. Although, there has been a whole host of technology introduced for augmented applications at work, such as glasses that provide instructions to workers as they follow intricate steps to assemble parts. This introduction of augmented reality has proved to increase productivity and accuracy, since workers don't have to constantly refer to a computer or manual – it's right within their line of vision as they work.



A huge benefit of using virtual reality in training is how much it can reduce liability and safety concerns. Employees can learn to work in situations or with equipment that would be dangerous if not for the virtual environment. The immersive quality of this training also increases engagement and emotional investment in learning, which aids in retention of what was learned when it's time to apply it in a real environment.

While there are clear benefits to using these technologies, especially for the manufacturing, construction, and healthcare industries, we have quite a way to go before they're widely adopted in the workplace. Luckily, there are many options already on the market, and if it makes sense for your organization to invest in this type of training, you have the opportunity to find ways of improving your business through a variety of augmented and virtual reality applications.

Promoting Training as an Employee Benefit

There are large amounts of data from surveys and studies showing that modern, engaging, employee training is a top concern for today's workforce. Training programs across the globe are incorporating technology and modern methods to shift from something that just has to be done to something talented employees are intentionally seeking out.

Given the high demand for employer-provided training and professional development, organizations that are investing in opportunities for employee learning have an advantage in recruiting top talent. Learning and development programs are increasingly being noted as an employee benefit in recruitment strategies because it shows how invested the organization is in their employees' experience and future.

The businesses with the best results are recognizing the need for talented people who are hungry to learn and grow – those who are dedicated to moving their career and their organization toward the next horizon.



Recommended Resources



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