WHAT WORKS IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Blended Learning

Jennifer Hofmann

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Buy This Book

To learning professionals looking for a way to make all the pieces fit.
Your questions inspired me to look for answers.

Contents

About the Series

ATD's What Works in Talent Development series addresses the most critical topics facing today's talent development practitioners. Each book in the series is written for trainers, by trainers, and offers a clear and defined pathway to solving real issues. Interwoven with the latest findings in technology and best practices, this series is designed to enhance your current efforts on core subject matter, while offering a practical guide for you to follow. Authored by seasoned experts, each book is jam-packed with easy-to-apply content—including job aids, checklists, and other reference materials—to make the learning transfer process simple.

The What Works in Talent Development series is a unique core collection designed for talent development practitioners at every career level. To date, the books in the series include:

- *Starting a Talent Development Program*
- *Blending Learning*
- *Onboarding*

Introduction

Has your organization made blended learning a priority? Are you confused about what blended learning is, and how it can affect learning results? Perhaps you've seen many blended learning programs fail and want to make sure your initiative is successful. If you are involved with blended learning design in any way, or want to be, you need tools, resources, and a blueprint to move forward.

Whatever your situation, you've come to the right place to get started. This book is a good place to begin your journey—it will provide answers to many of your questions; but possibly more important, it poses additional questions that only you and your organization can answer. Answering these questions as you begin is crucial to ensure success. In addition, you'll benefit from the supplemental tools and worksheets designed to help you plan, design, implement, and evaluate blended learning campaigns.

Why Is Blended Learning Important?

Today, most learning is blended learning. Typically learning initiatives include some combination of live learning and self-directed learning, supported by resources like infographics, videos, and e-learning. But modern blended learning is more than sequencing different media and activities that happen to be related by topic. It is about aligning learning objects with the most appropriate instructional strategies, techniques, and technologies, while meeting the needs of the organization and modern learners.

When designed and implemented effectively, blended learning is very powerful. It creates individual resources that support formal, planned learning events, and supports every informal moment of learning need. An added benefit is that resources are no longer shelved or filed after the learning management system (LMS) has indicated completion; rather, they become crucial references and tools that learners can use far after the instructional program has ended.

Blended learning supports enhanced outreach to learners while connecting workforces that are globally dispersed, working virtually, and constantly on-the-go. In addition, blended learning resources are accessible to learners at the time and place of their convenience, as well as accommodating individuals with sight, hearing, and mobility impairments. Thus, blended learning makes your talent development initiatives more inclusive.

Blended learning also enables more authentic learning, by allowing individuals to learn, recall, and apply what they've learned when and where they need the content and perform their work. Blended learning campaigns, and their associated resources, provide the ability to create personal learning paths, allowing individuals to assess their own needs and make informed decisions about how and what to learn.

This book supports all members of the talent development community by providing insights on how to succeed in this potentially complex process.

Chapter by Chapter Overview

Each of the books in the What Works in Talent Development series follows a similar framework. The chapters in this book discuss what modern blended learning is, why it's important, how to design it, how to implement it, how to evaluate the outcome, and what you can do to prepare for the future of learning.

Chapter 1: Getting Started introduces modern blended learning by providing a clear definition of what constitutes blended learning today. It considers the changing perceptions around learning while providing insight into how to assess your situation and ways to evaluate your current learning landscape. A new role is proposed to lead the change: the learning experience architect.

Because so much of modern blended learning is new, this chapter also includes a list of key terms to help you to manage blended learning conversations with your stakeholders. You'll be introduced to the concept of a learning campaign, which can replace the more traditional course model. Learning campaign design and implementation is a foundational concept that supports the rest of the book. It also ties together the five moments of learning need: when learning something new, when learning more, when applying what was learned, when solving problems, and when things change.

Chapter 1 asks you to consider many questions: What is the history and the future of blended learning at your organization? What is the current perception, and how can you shape it? How do you currently address all the moments of learning need? What is your role in moving forward with blended learning initiatives?

You will also find tools that allow you to reflect on past blended learning efforts, create learner personas, and start to build your personal learning network.

Chapter 2: Shaping the Future helps you set the stage for success. For blended learning to be successful, it is necessary to lay a strong foundation to manage the change from more traditional models.

This chapter addresses the migration from a "push training model," where learners are assigned content as determined by business needs, to a "pull learning model," where learners are enabled to learn how, where, and when they want to. It provides strategies for talent development to partner with the business and with learners to help the organization progress along the change curve.

Critical in this chapter is the discussion about where modern learning takes place (in a traditional classroom, at a desk, on a mobile device, or on the job) and how it takes place (formally or informally). These critical aspects determine how the learning programs should be designed, and help create a more authentic learning environment. We also discuss the application of adult learning principles, which is more important than ever.

Chapter 2 asks you to think about what surprised you about the design, cost, and instructional complexity of past blended learning initiatives. Other questions include how globalization, mobilization, and social collaborative technologies affect your campaign design. Should they? How do you make reusable individual learning resources, potentially supporting all the moments of learning need? How can you learn from problems with the design, technology, and implementation of early initiatives to mitigate future issues?

This chapter provides a job aid to help you plot where your organization is on the change curve. A list of additional resources rounds out this chapter.

Chapter 3: Designing Your Blended Learning Program addresses how to design modern blended learning campaigns. Instructional design is critical to blended learning, and arguably more important than ever before. As with more traditional methods, blended learning campaign design starts with a needs assessment. This process links learning outcomes to business requirements, and identifies whether your organization is ready for this type of implementation.

This chapter distinguishes the difference between instructional strategies that provide the framework for learning (game-based learning, problem-based learning, task-based learning), instructional techniques that are used to implement the strategy (lecture, brainstorm, gamification, simulations, and other activities), and instructional technologies that are used to deploy the techniques (authoring tools, virtual classrooms,

and other technology). The key takeaway here is that technology selection is the last part of the design process, not the first.

It can be difficult for everyone, including the design team, learners, and other stakeholders, to navigate the instructional complexity of a blended learning campaign. We'll discuss how using a course map can help, and you'll learn how to create one.

Questions addressed in this chapter include, "What role does collaboration play in technology selection?" "How ready is your organization to accept blended learning?" "How ready are you?" "Can you link your design directly to your business needs?"

These are tough questions, and it's up to you to provide the answers within your organization. To support your effort, you'll find a business requirements worksheet; a blended learning organizational readiness assessment; an instructional technology inventory worksheet; a tool to assist you in mapping your learning objectives to instructional strategies, techniques, and technologies; and a job aid to help you create your course map. A list of additional resources rounds out this chapter.

Chapter 4: Implementing the Plan assists you in making your design a functional reality. It's critical to have a way to manage all these moving parts and different content types. The content strategy plan addresses content substance, structure, workflow, and governance.

You also need a plan to facilitate your blended learning campaign. The facilitator is the face of the campaign, responsible for managing live virtual classroom lessons, moderating social experiences, supporting self-directed lessons, curating content, and providing virtual coaching and mentoring. This chapter suggests a team approach: using a facilitator and a producer together to motivate learners, encourage collaboration, manage technology, and ensure a successful learning experience.

Modern blended learning campaigns should evolve as new content and ideas are introduced; this requires the curation of content. Implementing a content curation plan that can inform and engage all learners around the topic is a way for the entire organization to stay up to date. It enables a culture of perpetual learning, and supports the modern workplace learning mindset that encourages learners to pursue independent learning and create their own personal learning paths. But managers are still vital to ensuring organizational buy-in, so this chapter provides guidance on how to engage managers in blended learning early.

Chapter 4 asks you to consider: What is your current process for content life cycle maintenance, and how might it need to change? What is the role of facilitation in your current strategy, and will it change? How do you currently engage managers in learning?

Tools to support your effort include a content strategy planning tool, a content curation planning tool, and a blended learning implementation plan worksheet.

Chapter 5: Transferring Learning and Evaluating Results discusses the particulars of how to evaluate a blended learning campaign. Design and implementation of blended learning is focused on planning—and the same should apply to evaluation. Blended learning campaigns introduce evaluation challenges that simply don't exist when assessing traditionally delivered programs.

You start the evaluation process by answering the question, "What does success look like and how will I recognize it when it happens?" This chapter helps you to identify the answer. You also need to determine what types of data should be collected, and how often.

Learner engagement is critical to the success of a blended learning campaign. This chapter provides a framework for measuring engagement across three factors: the emotional, intellectual, and environmental response to the campaign.

This chapter asks you to consider how you evaluate learner success today, and what you do with those data. Do you currently measure engagement? How do they change your design? Do you use all the data you collect?

Tools to support your effort include a worksheet to measure the three factors of learner engagement, a blended learning instructional design effective practice scorecard, and a tool for the learner to evaluate the facilitator, producer, and themselves.

Chapter 6: Planning Next Steps wraps up the book and includes topics that address the question, "Now what?" You will explore recommendations to ensuring ongoing success for blended learning campaign implementation in your organization. This chapter also reminds you to provide the right content, in the right place, at the right time, to the right audience. To assist with adoption, implement a marketing campaign and partner with managers. Use past evaluation results to help shape future campaigns.

Chapter 6 also envisions the future of blended learning. Personal learning pathways will provide laser-focused content to learners. Technologies like xAPI will allow you to measure engagement and learning more exactly. And new approaches like immersive learning and user-generated content will create experiences you couldn't even imagine five years ago.

This chapter, and this book, concludes by encouraging you to design a personal blended learning campaign to help you stay ahead of new trends and techniques.

Tools to support your effort include a blended learning marketing plan worksheet, a checklist of items to include in your blended learning campaign orientation,

a learning pathway planning worksheet, and a list of experts to help you start your personal learning network.

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

Blended Learning gets you started on the path to designing and implementing blended learning campaigns. It is meant to be a guide and overview for the topic. It is not meant to be an all-encompassing reference for instructional design, evaluation, or instructional technologies. The book provides enough information to get you started, as well as the tools and tips you need to head in the right direction. However, to be successful you'll need to incorporate the nuances of your organization and its particular needs. This book cannot cover every possible option, so be sure to tap into the resources provided in each chapter to take your exploration and deliberation to the next level.

And don't learn in a vacuum. Modern blended learning may be new to you and others in your organization; use this book to learn together so you can support your organization and your learners.

Chances are, you won't use every resource right away. That's OK. Modern blended learning supports every moment of your personal learning need—not just when you are learning something new. Refer to the individual tools when you need them.

This book is just one part of your personal learning journey. Share what you've learned with your learning networks, and become part of the way we'll all learn in the future.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you'll find icons highlighting concepts and ideas introduced in the text.

Icon	What It Means
	Tips from professionals will make your job easier and give you ideas to help apply the techniques and approaches discussed.
	Tools identify templates, checklists, worksheets, models, outlines, examples, illustrations, and other prototypes that can be a useful place to start.
	Resources are the books, blogs, articles, or even people that you can access to add to the information you've gained already and take your learning deeper.

1

Getting Started: What Is Blended Learning?

In This Chapter

- A definition of blended learning
- Ideas for assessing your situation
- A look at the changing perceptions around learning
- Who should lead the change to blended learning

Many practitioners have thought of blended learning as three-dimensional in the way it incorporates instructional treatments, leverages educational technologies, and occurs in different places. And yet the modern blend is more than what, how, and where people are learning. It's also about when people are learning. The fact is, modern learners are learning all the time—modern blended learning is actually four-dimensional.

Supported by job aids, worksheets, and curated resources, we will explore what works for modern blended learning. Use this book as your starting point in your personal learning path to blended learning.

Defining Blended Learning

Blended learning is a series of content blocks sequenced to create learning experiences. This is a managed, trackable curriculum with a beginning and an end. You, the learning professional, match learning objectives to the most appropriate delivery medium and learning environment to ensure that participants learn through facilitator-led delivery of content while exerting some element of control over where, when, how fast, and so on.

In addition to this formal learning experience, blended learning also includes those experiences that happen outside a formal curriculum. Learning designers need to keep in mind that learning is perpetual, happening all around your learners. This book will consider the entire experience, and address how you can support learners in every moment of learning need.

Modern Classrooms

Today's classroom isn't just a place—it's an experience. Modern learning happens in the traditional classroom, on a mobile device, at a desk, and on the job. These places of learning can include a wide number of learning technologies, and lend themselves to either formal or informal learning events. However, just because someone can learn in a particular place doesn't necessarily mean it's the most authentic learning environment.

The modern workforce is more dispersed yet more interconnected than ever before. Organizational learning is not just designed to provide information; its goal is to help learners become better at their jobs. When you design training, you need to take the audience into consideration and create programs that reflect the global, social, and mobile nature of work.

Modern Design

Instructional design for blended learning must be rigorously applied. Poor or ineffective design becomes much more apparent when the learner is exposed to a variety of instructional treatments that can't be "made OK" by an instructor in the room. The big question in a blended solution is how to know when to use which technique or technology—hardly a day goes by without some new theory or treatment being touted as the harbinger of groundbreaking change that will redefine how you instruct, learn, or assess.

One of the earliest examples of this phenomena dates back to Thomas Edison in 1913, when discussing motion pictures:

> The motion picture is the great educator of the poorer people. It incites their imagination by bringing the whole world before their eyes. It sets spectators thinking and raises their standard of living. Books will soon be obsolete in the public schools. Scholars will be instructed through the eye. It is possible to teach every branch of human knowledge with the motion picture. Our school system will be completely changed inside of ten years. (Keegan 2013, 145)

It's interesting to note that, more than 100 years later, people are still looking to video as the answer to all things in learning.

A more recent example is the introduction of MOOCs (massive open online courses). The *New York Times* declared 2012 "The Year of the MOOC" (Pappano 2012). But by 2015, the excitement abated:

> Three years after a groundswell of online learning swept through higher education, Stanford researchers who were at the forefront of the movement have concluded that online learning has not been the cure-all that many educators had hoped for. (Stober 2015)

The latest "game changer" is the emergence of the Experience API (xAPI) software, which allows content, like e-learning and video, to send information to learning management systems. It is intended to track engagement with learners and learning experiences, and is touted as "the future of learning" by facilitating the way we create and manage learning worldwide. The next several years will show if this latest innovation stands up to the hype.

New research into instructional tools, techniques, and technology helps to advance the profession, but the results and their interpretation generally leave a learning professional with little idea how to apply them, not to mention how to leverage them strategi-

cally to connect all the learning objectives in a blended learning curriculum. Instead, to facilitate understanding, it's useful to group concepts into three categories: instructional strategies, instructional techniques, and instructional technologies. While certainly not the only method of classification, organizing them in this way permits a meaningful discussion of blended learning. Here are the questions each category addresses.

Instructional Strategies

What instructional strategy should be used to help learners achieve the desired level of mastery for that specific learning objective? When you choose an instructional strategy, you choose an overall approach for addressing the instructional need: It frames the approach that you will subsequently populate with a variety of techniques and technologies to achieve your instructional objective. In some ways, the instructional strategy is based on fundamental characteristics of the learning audience and the content. Instructional strategies include game-based learning, social collaborative learning, problem-based learning, self-directed learning, case-based learning, and task-based instruction.

Instructional Techniques

What technique should be used to implement the instructional strategy? Techniques support the strategy, and generally can be thought of as peers—that is, you can substitute one technique with another, and the learner outcome should be the same. This is not to say that two techniques applied to the same content (say self-paced computer-based instruction versus traditional in-person) produce an equivalent experience, but the incremental progress the learner makes toward the overall instructional objective is the same. Instructional techniques frame the approach to how the learner will progress through the instruction, and they include simulations, curated learning environments, learning communities, gamification, case studies, moderated discussions, and lectures.

Instructional Technologies

What technologies and tools should be used to support the method? Technologies include authoring and delivery tools, and are used to deploy an instructional method. Lectures (a method) can be deployed in a traditional or virtual classroom, by video, or even by podcast (the technology). The technology selection will be determined largely on assessment and evaluation requirements. It will also be affected by where learners are when they apply the skill or need the knowledge, to ensure learning is deployed in the most authentic way possible.

TOOLS

Throughout this book, I will refer to these concepts as strategy, technique, and technology. To help you recall the difference between them when it's time to design your blended learning curriculum, refer to the "Instructional Strategies, Techniques, and Technologies" tool at the end of this chapter.

As blended learning becomes the norm, the hurdles you face will become more complicated. For example, tracking learning completion and mastery poses a serious logistical concern. You'll need to answer questions about how, and if, to measure engagement with infographics, videos, books and blogs, and social learning communities. Do you measure each interaction and engagement, or the entire experience? (This is the problem xAPI is intended to solve.)

You are going to have to do a lot of work to set yourself up for success. It's going to require you to design, deliver, and prepare content for learners, and understand all the available tools and techniques.

Modern Integration

For any blended learning solution to be effective, you need to be able to integrate many concepts into one cohesive program. The flexibility and options for blend can make this even more difficult than if you only used one type of training approach. In addition to being able to build content in authoring tools, moderate discussions, motivate learners, and manage a blended learning implementation, you need to understand how instructional technologies and strategies are interrelated.

This is challenging. New instructional strategies—curation, game-based learning, and social collaborative learning—are very different from traditional design strategies. Technologies are being introduced and phased out all the time.

Learning professionals tend to master these concepts in silos. You might attend a webinar on how to curate. You might take a course on how to facilitate in the virtual classroom. You might purchase a book on microlearning. That's great, but the problem is that cross-training rarely exists. How do you gamify the virtual classroom? Can you use microlearning during a simulation? Does a makerspace work on a mobile device?

The point of asking these questions is to illustrate that a true blended learning program doesn't keep its ingredients separate. When designing a blend, you combine

instructional strategies, techniques, and technologies with your knowledge about the modern learning landscape to create a product that balances the needs of learners with the requirements of the business.

Assessing Your Blended Learning Situation

Let's start with an assumption: Today, all learning is blended to some degree. I challenge you to identify any truly impactful program that doesn't combine facilitator-led and learner-led activities. Traditional classroom programs usually include pre-work and suggestions for follow-up activities. Lessons delivered virtually are often supported by videos and e-learning. Even content designed as a standalone module, such as an animated video demonstrating how to create a formula in a spreadsheet, works on the assumption that the learner will independently practice the new skill until the desired level of mastery is achieved.

Learning professionals influence the designed experiences, such as e-learning and traditional classroom programs. But as you assess the business requirements for training solutions, you also need to consider those experiences that are not designed—those experiences that are more learner-directed. Sure, you can assume that someone who completes an e-learning module will practice the skill, but why stop there? You can influence the mastery of that skill by offering guidance on how to practice, providing curated resources so they can learn more, and building reminders that encourage learners to continue toward mastery.

Instead of assessing whether you need a blended learning solution, let's investigate the true learning need. This starts with taking an inventory of what you already have.

Learning Landscape

Whether you are starting to design a specific blended learning program or creating a strategic plan for your talent development department, you need to know what's worked in the past, what resources are available, who your learners are, and how prepared your organization is to accept a modern blended learning design.

History

Even if your organization is just starting to create formal blended learning for the first time, you should research how different delivery methods and instructional treatments have worked in the past. It's important to understand that modern blended learning is a major change in the way that organizations traditionally deliver content. And, it affects much more than just the learner population; you need to consider where the entire

organization is on the change curve. Chapter 2 will provide strategies for encouraging the adoption of blended learning through the four stages of change: denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment.

Use evaluation data or LMS reports to determine how well different initiatives were received and how influential they were on learning outcomes and performance.

Don't forget the human element. Interview designers, learners, project sponsors, and anyone else who was involved to get a full picture of what has worked in the past and what has not. Make sure you get to the "why." If it didn't work, was the reason technology, a reluctance to adopt, lack of sponsorship, or just a bad idea? Make sure you document what you've learned, so your entire organization can learn from previous successes and failures.

TOOL

At the end of this chapter, you'll find the "Reflection on Past Blended Learning Efforts" tool, which can guide your reflection on past blended learning implementations. Use this informal tool at the beginning of every new project so you can capitalize on past successes and avoid past mistakes.

Resources

Before you start designing a blended learning curriculum, it's critical that you know what resources are already available to you. Research the following:

- What delivery technologies and authoring tools has your organization already invested in, and how can you get access to those tools? (Chapter 3 will discuss six different categories of learning technologies, and provide a checklist to help you take inventory of what your organization does and doesn't have.)
- Who knows how to use those tools?
- Do you use internal resources or external suppliers?
- Is there training available for you to gain some new skill sets?
- Do you have the time to learn?

It's important to remember that you are not an inexhaustible resource on this team, and, depending on the instructional complexity of your blend, chances are you

don't have the expertise to complete the entire project, or the time to get it done, on your own.

PRO TIP

If you are working on a small or one-person team, you need to plan accordingly. Perhaps you have the skills to design, develop, and moderate the entire initiative, but you will probably need more time to roll out the program.

When you design your blend, critically evaluate if you have the resources to be successful. If not, consider what is critical right away and what might be developed in later versions. A simple design that is successful is ultimately much more valuable than a complex design that fails.

Learner Profiles

Engaging your learners takes more than content and technology. You need to know who your learners are; in effect, you need to design your programs with *personas* in mind. Don't assume that because someone is a salesperson, for example, you understand that learner's persona. When you create a persona, think about the learner's individual needs, and how those needs intersect with their professional development goals. What's their existing skill set, and how do you expect them to behave in a certain scenario? Each profile will include background on the persona, including where they're doing their job, what education level they have, their experience with training and education in general, and as much other detail as you can include. The better you know your learner, the better your blended learning program will be. See the sidebar for an example of a call center representative's learner persona.

TOOL

At the end of this chapter, you'll find a worksheet to help you create your own learner personas.

Call Center Representative Learner Persona

Mandy is always eager to meet the needs of her customers. She consistently puts the customers first and does her best to make them feel appreciated. Mandy believes that customers prefer to speak to a human being, so she avoids suggesting the use of the website quick reference and FAQs. She thrives on fostering consulting-type relationships with the client base, and would prefer to talk with the customers than tell them to use self-service applications. She has had formal training on how to deal with difficult customers and was often brought in on calls that other representatives could not manage.

Age: 45

Education: Undergraduate degree in social science

Prior work history: 10 years of experience in customer service for a large pharmaceutical company

Learner preparation: Mandy is eager to start this new position, and has carefully read through everything she could find about the company and services provided. She went as far as to call in to the service desk to see what the experience is like.

Technology preferences: Mandy uses a laptop computer at home, and carries an Android smartphone with her. She uses the phone mostly for calls, and games.

Challenges and obstacles: Mandy is hesitant to embrace web-based resources and does not consider herself tech-savvy.

Learning Need

According to Sardek Love (2016), "Failure to invest sufficient time to properly define the problem almost always results in providing a solution to the wrong problem." Creating a blended learning solution is a lot of work, potentially expensive, and, when not done for the right reasons, can leave a lasting negative impression of the value of blended learning in an organization. Because of this, it's critical that you conduct a training needs analysis before building your blended learning solution. It needs to meet both the needs of the learner and the needs of the business.

This shouldn't be a surprise. Conducting a needs analysis should be the first step in the design of any training program. Here are five phases to consider when conducting a needs assessment:

- **Organizational Needs:** Identify and validate organizational goals.
- **Performance Needs:** Identify gaps between current and desired performance, including the causes for those performance gaps.

- **Performer Needs:** Identify existing learner knowledge.
- **Potential Solutions:** Identify learning and nonlearning solutions.
- **Findings and Recommendations:** Present a final report that frames data, results, and recommendations.

PRO TIP

Your needs assessment for the blended learning program will likely overlap with those for other programs and possibly uncover the same information. Meet a colleague for coffee and compare your results. You will minimize duplication of efforts, and make your insights even more useful.

Blended learning requires you to be even more specific when identifying performance needs and performer needs. (As a result, you may have more specific potential solutions.) That's because with modern blended learning design, you can be responsive not just when learners are learning something new for the first time; you can design and implement solutions that affect every moment of learning need.

Conrad Gottfredson and Bob Mosher (2012) identified five moments of learning need to help illustrate where performance support could supplement the formal learning process. These same moments lend themselves to the entire blended learning process, because different training solutions support different moments of need. These moments are:

- when people are learning how to do something for the first time (new)
- when people are expanding the breadth and depth of what they have learned (more)
- when people need to act upon what they have learned, which includes planning what they will do, remembering what they may have forgotten, or adapting their performance to a unique situation (apply)
- when problems arise, or things break or don't work the way they were intended (solve)
- when people need to learn a new way of doing something, which requires them to change skills that are deeply ingrained in their performance practices (change).

Chapter 3 will address how to meet these moments of need during the formal blended learning campaign and after the formal program has concluded.

RESOURCES

The neuroscience of learning shows that a training-as-an-event model lets organizations down and leaves learners scratching their heads. To embrace all that learners need to support their performance on the job, Megan Torrance expanded Conrad Gottfredson and Bob Mosher's five moments to nine. Although all nine moments may not be relevant to every project, they provide a framework for thinking about multiple touchpoints with the learner over time. See Megan's *TD* article "Nine Moments for Learning" for more information (www.td.org/magazines/td-magazine/nine-moments-of-learning).

Changing Perceptions

It won't come as a surprise to you that some elements of learning initiatives aren't taken seriously by the learner population. Webinars are considered hour-long, listen-only events. Learners don't consider them to be as effective as face to face, and the recording has the same value as the live session. Pre-work is considered optional, and rarely completed.

In addition, everyone, learners and training team members alike, overly focus on the "most live" part of the training curriculum. For example, if presented with a blend that includes e-learning modules, a virtual classroom session, a two-day workshop, and a variety of follow-up activities, the focus will be on the two-day workshop. Communication will focus on logistics of getting there, and the learners will view any self-directed work as optional. After all, if it was really important, the content would be delivered in the classroom.

For blended learning to be successful, these perceptions need to change. Every part of a blend—regardless of delivery technology (like virtual classroom, video, or infographic) or instructional strategy (like microlearning, social-collaborative learning, or simulation)—needs to be considered important. Chapter 2 will consider change management strategies in more depth, but for now you need to start by establishing some new labels for the different components of a blend.

Words matter, especially when trying to communicate new ideas and teach new concepts. Terms like microlearning, virtual classrooms, and mobile learning aren't

enough to encompass what you are trying to accomplish, and, frankly, don't mean anything to your learners. The goal of modern blended learning is to integrate content, exercises, and assessment into a seamless curriculum, regardless of what delivery technologies or instructional strategies are used. To accommodate this goal, you need to embrace a subtle shift in language when designing blended learning experiences. And because an individual lesson will often be part of a larger learning solution, the language shift applies to all modern learning, independent of the learning environment.

Modern workplace learning is more than technology. It's about changing the way you think about how modern learners actually learn. Adopting a language that supports this new way of thinking is a great way to start. Throughout this book, I'll be using the following terms:

- **Session:** A standalone presentation, webinar, interactive e-learning module, or similar unit that has no associated assessments or required actions. The intent of a session is to share information and provide opportunities for basic interactions to ensure understanding.

- **Lesson:** When the audience is actively learning something new, with an expectation that there will be some assessment (either a formal test or self-assessment) to ensure that knowledge has been transferred or skills obtained. A lesson is characterized by practice: If the learner doesn't have the opportunity to do something with the content, it is not a lesson. It can be delivered through a virtual classroom, with an e-learning module, in person, or using many other technologies. The word *lesson* makes all content in a blend equal, and it shifts the focus from the delivery technology to the content, because learners are not distracted by tech speak.

- **Practice Activity:** The opportunity to practice or use content obtained during a lesson. The activity can be collaborative or self-led.

- **Assessment:** An evaluation or checkpoint that ensures the learning has been transferred. It can be a traditional multiple-choice type test or on-the-job observation; embedded as a moderated activity, like group work; or self-directed, like a reflection activity.

- **Resource:** Reinforces, reminds, or introduces content. It is reusable, and should be designed as a performance support tool. Resources include infographics, short videos, podcasts, social collaborative communities, and coaching—anything that supports the learning before and after the formal event.

- **Content Block:** You might also call this a "chunk" of learning. A content block is a group of integrated lessons, activities, assessments, and resources that, when combined, support an individual learning objective or goal.
- **Learning Campaign:** More and more frequently, the term blended learning isn't descriptive enough, especially when you consider that learning takes place perpetually, even when the training department isn't looking. To become more of a partner with your business, you need make sure learning opportunities and content are where and when your learners need them. A learning campaign extends the learning beyond formal events.
- **Perpetual Learning:** While this term sounds a lot like lifelong learning, it's more nuanced. It takes into consideration that everything we do, in every waking moment, is, or can be, an opportunity to learn. Every time we read an article, click a link, or complete a task, we are learning something new or practicing and reinforcing a skill. Sometimes it is conscious, sometimes unconscious. But it is still learning. You need to find ways to encourage, support, and anticipate perpetual learning in the content, interaction, and assessment areas you manage.
- **Learning Experience Architect:** This individual is the project manager for modern blended learning implementation. Learning experience architects constantly improve the learning experience through design and implementation, all while balancing the demands of the business with modern learners' needs. This individual needs to understand design, development, facilitation, curation, and a lot more. The learning experience architect must be able to discuss the business of learning, evaluate delivery technologies and instructional strategies, and stay ahead of trends in the industry.

Leading the Change

Who should lead the movement to blended learning? It's an evolution of the traditional L&D role—learning professionals are already expected to be masters of traditional learning roles, including developer, facilitator, and designer. Combine this with the expectation that learning professionals are also producers, moderators, curators, and learner advocates, and it becomes clear that the job is not only important but complicated. The ultimate responsibility is to provide the correct content, to the correct audience, at the appropriate time. Given how many of us came to learning through other professions, this is a herculean task.

Because of this, I've adopted a new title to best represent the professional responsible for workplace learning: learning experience architect (Seitzinger 2016). Learning experience architects constantly improve the learning experience through design and implementation, all while balancing the demands of the business with modern learners' needs, and managing the change process.

RESOURCES

To learn more about becoming a learning experience architect and reimagining your role, read "The Learning Experience Architect: Reimagining Your Role" on the InSync Training blog. (You can access it at http://bit.ly/2iwUDq2.)

To establish credibility as an expert in blended learning approaches, the learning experience architect should develop at least a working competence in the following areas:

- **The business of learning:** Being able to balance the requirements of the business with the needs of your learners enables you to become a valued business adviser who can address important issues such as the ROI of training, measurement and evaluation, project planning, and organizational needs.
- **Instructional strategies, technologies, and techniques:** Determining whether new approaches like simulations or social collaboration are good for your audience can be a struggle for even seasoned learning professionals. It's typical to inconsistently apply new techniques like gamification, and then discard them for the next big thing. The learning experience architect must be fluent in the language of modern instructional design to make the best decisions and communicate effectively with the rest of the implementation team and stakeholders.
- **Collaboration:** Today's learners are more connected than ever through social media and their mobile devices. Collaboration needs to be strategically implemented in your blended learning designs, so that it is valued by the learners. To develop competence in effective collaboration, learning experience architects can make connections and participate in communities

of practice. Immersing yourself in collaborative experiences will help you make informed recommendations to your learners.

- **Educational technology trends:** When it comes to new learning trends, learning experience architects understand that knowing what's hot now is just half the battle. If you can find out "what's next," you'll establish yourself as a partner to the business, and make sure that working and learning are never far apart.

By establishing the learning experience architect as the individual in charge of blended learning adoption, modern design expertise, and the business of learning (among so many other things), the organization can show its commitment to blended learning as a valued learning experience.

Training the Team

Part of your change plan needs to include reskilling your training team. Consider that any individual might be called on to moderate social collaborative experiences, curate learning resources, author e-learning or video content, facilitate in virtual classrooms, or manage a blended learning implementation. Trying to successfully implement a blend without experienced human resources can put a halt to your initiative before it even starts.

Whenever possible, encourage the training team to develop these skills before it becomes critical. Research learning options and help individuals create their own personal learning paths so they can be successful. By encouraging members of your team to develop new skill sets to help them master the design, development, and implementation of blended learning, you will assist them along the change curve. This investment in their professional development is an investment in the success of the business.

TOOL

Looking for some resources that support your professional development? Check out the "Build Your Personal Learning Network" tool at the end of this chapter.

What's Next?
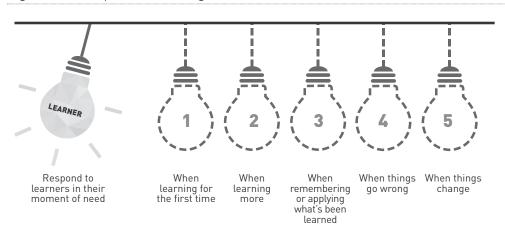
How do you know if your blended learning campaign has been successful? While chapter 4 will discuss the specifics of how you evaluate each content block, the technology, the facilitation team, and learner success, it's still an important point to contemplate when you're getting started.

You will know whether the program is successful if you've continued to ask questions throughout the process and paid close attention to learner engagement, facilitator involvement, assessment results, and so on. As your blended learning campaign becomes more and more instructionally complex, it becomes even more critical not to wait to the end to take a pulse and evaluate your success up to that point.

It's important to understand that if you're not paying attention and your blended learning design falls apart, learners may recognize the failure days, weeks, or even months before you do. Don't make the mistake of just paying attention to the "live" event. You need to connect the dots between all your content, anticipating what your learners need and ensuring they have access to that content at the right time.

There's another important reason why you can't wait until the end of your blend to evaluate your success: Modern blended learning never ends. Even after you close the books in the LMS, learning continues. So another barometer of success is that the tools and content you provided during the formal program are accessed months later, and recognized by the learners as useful and worth their time. Remember, modern learners are learning perpetually, in every moment of learning need. The job of the talent development professional is to anticipate and support this perpetual learning cycle (Figure 1-1).

Figure 1-1. Perpetual Learning

LEARNER

Respond to learners in their moment of need

1 When learning for the first time

2 When learning more

3 When remembering or applying what's been learned

4 When things go wrong

5 When things change

Questions to Explore

- What does your organization consider to be the future of learning? Do you agree?
- How do globalization and mobilization affect your learning audience and content design?
- Aside from language and culture concerns, what are barriers to success in your organization?
- What is the history of blended learning implementation in your organization? Have past failures thrown up difficult barriers? How will you keep blended learning from seeming like the next fad?
- What moments of learning need did your last training program address? What moments were overlooked? Can you address them now, embedding them in the flow of work?
- What learning terms in your organization bring on a negative reaction? How can you change the perception, or change the word completely, to get a better response from your learners and other key stakeholders?
- As you work toward becoming a learning experience architect, how do your learning needs align with those of your learners? How can you use that to your advantage when designing blended learning?
- What does blended learning success mean to you? How will you recognize it?

Tools for Support

Instructional Strategies, Techniques, and Technologies

Instructional design for modern blended learning must be rigorously applied, anticipate the correct moments of learning need, and embed content in the flow of work. To facilitate understanding and permit meaningful discussion in the context of blended learning, it's useful to group concepts into three categories: strategies, techniques, and technologies. Use this job aid to help you recall the difference between these concepts when it's time to design your blended learning curriculum.

Instructional Strategies	Instructional Techniques	Instructional Technologies
Instructional strategies are the overall approach for addressing the instructional need—they frame the approach that you will subsequently populate with a variety of techniques and technologies to achieve your instructional objective. In some ways, the instructional strategy is based on fundamental characteristics of the nature of both the learning audience and the content.	Instructional techniques support the strategy, and generally can be thought of as peers of each other— that is, you can substitute one technique with another, and the learner outcome should be the same (although the experience will vary extensively). Instructional techniques frame the approach on how the learner will progress through the instruction.	Technology selection will be determined largely on assessment and evaluation requirements. It will also be affected by where learners are when they are applying the skill or need the knowledge; you want to deploy learning in the most authentic way possible.

Instructional Strategies	Instructional Techniques	Instructional Technologies
What instructional strategies do you plan to use to help learners achieve the desired level of mastery for your learning objective? (Check as many as apply.) □ Task-based learning □ Game-based learning □ Social collaborative learning □ Problem-based learning □ Project-based learning □ Inquiry-based learning □ Case-based learning □ Other: _____	What instructional techniques do you plan to use to implement the instructional strategy? (Check as many as apply.) □ Lectures (live, recorded, or print on screen) □ Brainstorming between learners □ Simulations (including role play and immersive learning) □ Gamification (including leader boards and badging) □ Case studies (including examples that illustrate key points) □ Moderated discussion boards (including in-person discussions and online) □ Other: _____	What technologies and tools do you plan to use to support the instructional techniques? (Check as many as apply.) □ Knowledge and content distribution □ Communication and interaction □ Social interactions, collaboration, and community □ Assessment and evaluation □ Immersive learning experiences □ Curation □ Other: _____

Reflection on Past Blended Learning Efforts

These questions can help guide your reflection of past blended learning implementations. Use this informal tool at the beginning of every new project so you can capitalize on previous successes and avoid past mistakes.

What is the history of blended learning implementation in your organization?

- What delivery methods and instructional treatments have worked in the past?
- Why were they successful?
- What delivery methods and instructional treatments have NOT worked in the past?
- Why were they unsuccessful? (Was it technology related, reluctance to adopt, lack of sponsorship, or just a bad idea?)

How prepared is your organization to accept a modern blended learning design?

- Who are your learners?
- What resources are available?
- Where is the organization on the change curve?
- Have past failures thrown up difficult barriers? If so, what are those barriers?

How will you keep blended learning from seeming like the next fad?

Creating a Learner Persona

Learner Name	
[Learner's Picture or Avatar]	**Age:** **Current Occupation:** **Education:** **Prior Work History:**

Provide a description about the learner, including any motivations, goals, and frustrations.

Learner Preparation

Technology Preferences

Challenges and Obstacles

Build Your Personal Learning Network

Use this job aid to help you build a personal learning network that supports your professional development.

Personal	Learning	Network
The *personal* element of these networks requires you to make connections and grow relationships with those who have different areas of expertise. As you collaborate, you exchange insights, answer questions, and discuss the goings-on in this new learning environment.	The *learning* element relates to staying on trend, and identifying and accessing key information. You'll swap ideas and expand upon what you learned on your own.	The *network* element defines the concept of a PLN. Within the network, you have an outlet for immediate outreach. You know who to turn to when a challenging or ambiguous concept arises, letting you focus on getting an answer, rather than worrying about where to start.

Create (and Refine) Your Personal Learning Network

- Set aside several hours to sort through those hundreds of emails and dozens of resources you wanted to look at "one day." Delete anything you've been holding on to for more than 30 days. There is too much information coming in for you to be concerned about what you have ignored for months already.
- Think about why you thought these resources were important at the time. Were they recommended by a trusted colleague? Did keywords stand out to you in the subject lines? Start to think about why you were collecting this content in the first place, but don't take the time now to read and try to learn. It's just too much.
- Create email rules that send these resources to a specific reading folder as they come in. And sort that folder by sender. Schedule one hour per week to review resources by sender. If you find you never read a content source, unsubscribe.
- Look through your list of recorded webinars and look for alternatives to watching one-hour recordings. Most webinar speakers have other, more accessible, microlearning resources like articles, blogs, and infographics. These shorter items will allow you to scan for relevance and decide if the longer webinar approach to the topic is worth your time.

Curate Your Content for Your Own Use

- When we consider curation for the learning field, we usually think about an expert commenting on content and sharing it with the field. But curation can, and should, start on a personal level.
- Once you have a list of content items that seem relevant, it's time to review them in depth and capturing notes on what makes those items important to your work and your personal development.
- If you can't capture even one note on why an item is important, discard it. It won't suddenly become important six months from now, because you won't remember it existed.
- To help organize information, use a free tool like Diigo to save and tag your online resources. For example, perhaps you've just read a great article on incorporating microlearning in a blended learning campaign. Enter the link into Diigo, add tags for microlearning, and include a few sentences about why this article was useful for you.
- As you collect more information on this topic, you will start to create a narrative about the topic, and identify content providers that resonate with you. And, when you have a need to create or discuss microlearning, for example, you will have trusted resources at hand.

Share Your Curated Insights

- Modern workplace learning is all about collaboration and sharing. You've started to connect all of the dots by collecting disparate content, organizing it, and providing thoughtful personal commentary on the value of the individual pieces.
- You can now make yourself part of someone else's PLN. Compile your curated insights and share them with your internal training team. Use social networks like Twitter, LinkedIn, or Facebook to share individual resources, summaries of topics, and your opinion on the value of content channels.

Additional Resources

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About the Author

Jennifer Hofmann, virtual classroom mastermind and blended learning pioneer, is founder and president of InSync Training. Her entirely virtual consulting firm specializes in the design and delivery of engaging, innovative, and effective modern blended learning. Under her expert leadership, Inc. 500|5000 named InSync Training the 10th fastest-growing education company in the United States in 2013 and the 20th fastest in 2014, and inducted it to its Inc. 5000 list for four consecutive years. Dell Women's Entrepreneur Network, *Forbes* Most Powerful Women Issue, The NativeAdVantage, and Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses have all recognized Jennifer's entrepreneurial drive.

Jennifer has written and contributed to a number of well-received and highly regarded books, including *The Synchronous Trainer's Survival Guide: Facilitating Successful Live Online Courses, Meetings, and Events; Live and Online!: Tips, Techniques, and Ready to Use Activities for the Virtual Classroom;* and *Tailored Learning: Designing the Blend That Fits*.

Jennifer frequently presents in person and online for leading learning organizations, including the Training Magazine Network, ATD, the eLearning Guild, and Citrix. Subscribe to Jennifer's blog at blog.insynctraining.com and connect with her on LinkedIn for new content and timely insights.

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