Convenient Tailored Learning

The appeal of convenience and opportunity created in advanced corporate learning environments.

Learning Has a New Meaning

It's no secret that the more knowledge and employee acquires about his or her job the better equipped that employee will be to perform the duties of that job. It is also no secret that in today's ever-changing and fast-paced world, the idea of educating employees with the same traditional methods just doesn't cut it anymore. While current corporate environments still include traditional methods of live in-person training, organizations understand that, with such advancements as on-the-go education, mobile learning apps, and on-demand e-learning, employees with busy schedules and hectic lives need more convenient methods of learning[1]. The current climate of the corporate learning environment has changed to meet the needs of their employees by focusing more on the learner and incorporating more mobile, social, and self-paced learning tools[2].

But not all learning is created equal. Some of the top findings yielded from research in the field of corporate learning indicate that the biggest priorities of incorporating more effective and competitive learning tools involves focusing on social and mobile technologies as well as integration and implementation of these tools based on user experience[3]. The focus on talent management and workforce development has led to a considerable change in the way companies educate and employ their biggest asset: their people.

The New Face of Today's Corporate Classrooms: Course Delivery Modalities

It used to be that when an organization wanted to introduce a new concept to its workforce, they ushered them into a structured training classroom, gave them the material, maybe administered a quiz or live exercise to make sure the trainees understood the content, then sent them on their way to execute what was learned. That is no more. Today, the corporate classroom may look like a virtual training or e-learning module on a computer or mobile training (m-learning) on any portable device such as cell phone or tablet. The traditional classroom may still exist but usually with some component of the aforementioned learning modalities to create a blended learning experience.

The traditional classroom is still and will always be a solid foundation of corporate education[4]. The focus remains of gathering trainees in a group to express the common goal of the organization in a social setting where the trainees can share ideas and interact with each other. The instructor-led live exchange of information made available in this setting fosters the kind of understanding of basic concepts that organizations need as a foundation of the intended learning.

With e-learning we are seeing more computer- and online-based learning with a focus less social interaction but more personalized learning that is self-paced and not usually instructor-led[4.] It also tends to yield higher scores in learning and testing because of the ability of the trainees to have more control over the learning pace and administration[4]. Mobile learning (m-learning), while similar in some aspects to e-learning, is slightly different in terms of access, availability, and, as the name implies, mobility. M-learning allows the learner to use their mobile device to access learning tools on-the-go. It is a more personal and personalized method of learning that corporations can take advantage of to disseminate information necessary for work performance[5].

In order to make sure that all learning styles are accommodated, the new corporate learning environment also includes a blended setting of both traditional with e-learning and/or m-learning tools. Research has shown that organizations that are not entirely ready for the sole use of e-learning or m-learning have found that the blended learning environment is a great way to transition organizations to digital learning[6].

What to Expect from Today's Learning Environments

With the dawn of the new age of technology and learning, methods have changed and with them, expectations of learning and training outcomes. Employees and L&D managers should expect a rise in the use of m-learning and gamification in the corporate classroom, both real and virtual[7]. The use of this type of interactive learning enables students and trainees to learn and experience the material simultaneously. Simulation of real-world scenarios allow for instant and reactive responses to job-related tasks.

Along these same lines are the use of more on-the-job learning – as opposed to separate classroom or training-specific learning only. The learning to experience ratio is increased when the learning environment is the actual work environment[8]. With the increase in recognition of the importance of thorough job training, organizations are now looking to train managers to provide effective feedback in real-time to improve performance and foster employee growth.

To drive home just how important organizations employees have found professional learning and education to be, another trend to look out for will be the access to 24/7 training in e-learning and m-learning formats to fit flex schedules. Webinars and other live and pre-recorded training will become the norm so that organizations can be more accommodating to the schedules, demands, and needs of their employees[9].

Advantages and Disadvantages

So what are the pros and cons of these different types of corporate learning modalities? While all of them have their advantages and disadvantages, there are a few on both sides of each that are worth mentioning. An advantage of traditional learning lies in the valuable face-to-face interaction of learning in a group setting with peers whose learning goals are similar. A disadvantage is that there is no flexible option for this live learning setting. There is a time and place for this type of training and it does not necessarily accommodate the fast-paced and ever-changing needs of today's employees.

Similarly, the advantages on e-learning and m-learning lie in the flexibility of the schedule with which a trainee can learn and the pace at which training can be completed. The disadvantages are that the trainees need the discipline to and the knowledge to complete the Training needed in the absence of an instructor.

Finally, the blended learning provides the best of both the traditional learning environment and the digital world. Trainees have more options when it comes to access to learning and scheduling. The disadvantages here are in the possible overwhelm of options and the need for each trainee to know what training is necessary for their specific job.

Endnotes

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