Why [Online, Classroom, & Blended] Training Works

And tips to make your training successful—regardless of modality

5 Reasons Online Training Works

Learning & Development leaders are seeking training solutions catered to an increasingly digital and global workplace. Future solutions need to meet the unique needs and demands of the modern learner. They need to be entertaining and accessible and most of all, effective. Here are 5 reasons why online/on-demand training answers the call for a valued and effective learning experience.

1. OUR BRAINS ARE WIRED FOR BITE-SIZE LEARNING

Online/on-demand training utilizes microlearning—the spaced delivery of bite-sized nuggets of content. And it works because this is how our brains best process and retain information. Research shows we can only remember seven (plus or minus two) things at a time[1] and we're unable to focus on a learning activity for more than ten to fifteen minutes at a time.[2] **Bite-size information, when artfully pieced together, reduces cognitive load and allows the brain to more efficiently process and learn.**

2. MODERN LEARNING IS INSTANT AND AUTOMATIC

Modern-day consumer behavior demonstrates that when people want something, they want it now, they want it to be entertaining, and they don't want to deal with unnecessary fluff. That behavior extends to the workplace—**we want our learning and development to be just right, at the right**

time, and in micro-moments to fit within a busy day. The modern learner wants everything customized to his or her unique tastes and eccentric needs.

3. CONNECT TO LEARNERS WHERE THEY ARE—ONLINE

The internet sets the perfect stage and audience for online/on-demand learning. Just consider that there are more than 40,000 Google search queries per second, 656 million tweets each day, and 67 million Instagram posts shared in 24 hours. **Our excessive internet activity demonstrates that we like to learn, contribute, be heard, share, and stay connected in bite-sized chunks.**

4. VIDEO ENHANCES LEARNING

YouTube has transformed the landscape from a "tell me" society to a "show me" society. And it's no surprise as to

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why. Research shows 65% of people are visual learners. Specifically, **studies show presentations that pair video with text are 83% more effective at long-term skill comprehension and retention than text alone.**[3]

5. THE UP-AND-COMING WORKFORCE DEMANDS IT

By 2025, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce.[4] Millennials are digital natives who grew up in a media-saturated world. They don't like to be lectured. They thrive on self-discovery and personal experience. And they expect learning to be accessible and go hand-in-hand with entertainment and exploration. **Online/on-demand training leverages the digital and mobile technologies Millennials rely on.**

"Consider how quickly corporate learning has evolved. In only one generation, we have gone from traditional corporate universities to e-learning, blended learning, talent-driven learning, and then continuous learning. Tools like Google, YouTube, Workplace by Facebook, Slack, and others have totally changed the learning landscape, so our job now is simply to deliver learning to where people are."

— **Josh Bersin,** President and Founder, Bersin & Associates

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☑ Tips to Make Live Online (Synchronous) Training Effective

- **KEEP IT SHORT**
  The cutoff for an effective online training session is ninety minutes. Anything longer has diminishing return. However, if you do need to lengthen your session, never go longer than two hours and add a ten-minute break in the middle. Learners need time to process and regroup before having the energy and attention-span to refocus on screen.

- **UTILIZE ENGAGEMENT TOOLS**
  Take advantage of the digital tools connected to Live Online platforms. Polls are one of the most common and effective tools. When you intersperse polls throughout each session, you engage the audience, gather opinions, and move from theory to application through questions.

- **PUT NEW SKILLS TO THE TEST**
  As sessions come to a close, end by asking learners to make a commitment to practice the new skill. Then, at the start of the next session, ask learners to chat or answer a poll related to their assignment. When you queue real-life application of skills, it's more likely to happen.

- **MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE**
  Take advantage of the flexibility that Online Training platforms offer. If you deliver virtual materials that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, you're more likely to see quick and consistent user adoption.

☑ Tips to Make Online/On-demand Training Effective

- **MONITOR PROGRESS**
  Online platforms allow training administrators to monitor learners' progress. Watch the data carefully to see who is and isn't completing assignments. And then, hold people accountable. If someone left an hour into a day-long classroom training, what would you do? Use the same approach in your online courses. Just because learners are remote, doesn't mean your influence as a coach or trainer has to be.

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5 Reasons Classroom Training Works

Seasoned Learning & Development leaders have built successful careers in the classroom. It's an environment they trust because it works. But up-and-coming trainers and students often associate the classroom with a stuffy, sleepy lecture hall. Here are 5 reasons why classroom/instructor-led training still holds its own in learning and development.

1. INTERNAL LEADERS CREATE BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Any course that involves leaders—either as the trainer or a participant—leverages personal, team, and organizational development. **New behaviors are more likely to go from the classroom to the workplace, from idea to application, or from theory to results.** Leaders can coach, conduct skill reviews, and build new skills into performance reviews to ensure they're integrated into the culture. VitalSmarts' research shows that while trainers may score higher on evaluations, leaders create more change within the organization.

2. THERE'S NO REPLACEMENT FOR FACE-TO-FACE PRACTICE

The classroom is the ideal environment to employ deliberate practice which improves ability. **If you expect people to master complex interpersonal skills, the ratio of lecture and discussion to coaching and feedback must lean toward practice.** And, certain methods of training require human, real-time elements over technology. Particularly, learning initiatives that involve social contracting and energetic discussion or ones that require directed feedback with social support.

3. THE POWER OF IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK

When training calls for people to act differently, participants need to be given clear feedback. This type of directed practice is best done through real-time rehearsals with others who can provide coaching in real-time. Used well, structured rehearsals move people from appreciating the concepts to enacting the behaviors. **Post training results show that after a few moderated rehearsals, most participants demonstrate acompetency for each skill.**

4. TAILORED LEARNING AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

People don't connect strongly to generic skills, charts, and logic. Rather, they connect to direct and vicarious experiences, personal stories, and deeply-held values. **Classroom training can be adapted from generic best practices to the results and values people really care about.** When the skills and concepts from training are adapted to the company's core values, it breathes excitement and life into vanilla behaviors.

5. THE CLASSROOM IS A SANCTUARY FOR SAFE AND FOCUSED LEARNING

Classroom training offers a learning environment where everyday distractions can be controlled or eliminated. Learners can escape the pressures of their office, their email, and their to-do list to focus on new skills. This distance between work and training allows learners to dive into the content, practice skills with peers face-to-face, and detach mentally from workplace pressures that will inevitably occupy their mind and workspace should they be sitting at their desk.

"In order to turn skills into behaviors, you need clear and immediate feedback. Far from being disruptive, this kind of real-time feedback from a trainer, coach, or peer allows you to analyze and adjust your performance much more rapidly, resulting in substantial improvement."

– Joseph Grenny, Cofounder, VitalSmarts

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☑ Tips to Make Classroom Training Effective

- **FOLLOW THE ENERGY**
  Track the classroom energy closely, notice when there's a lull and opt for a break. Learners need a ten-minute break at least every ninety-minutes. To avoid losing engagement and attention span, add breaks into your schedule and stick to it.

- **SPACE LEARNING OVER TIME**
  Space learning over one or two weeks. Teach people in two-hour sessions that end with a challenge to try out what they learned. When you regroup, start the class by debriefing and discussing what they tried and learned during the challenge. Then add new skills.

- **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, COACH**
  When learning new skills, practice and coaching are essential. Build in scenarios that people can relate to—scenarios specific to their role, the organization, or their most pressing problems. Ensure the scenarios give learners a fairly realistic opportunity to practice the skill and then get feedback from a coach—either the trainer or peer.

- **PUT SKILLS TO THE TEST**
  Require learners to pick a test case for where they will apply their skills. At the end of each lesson, give them five to ten minutes to apply what they just learned to their test case. Have them reflect and record their thoughts and next actions in writing. At the end of the course, push them to set a date for when they will approach their test case and use their new skills.

5 Reasons Blended Learning Works

When it comes to learning and development, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Every organization and team has unique needs, goals, and challenges. When designing or selecting training, is it best to lean towards online or the classroom? This either/or thinking is not only outdated, but also ineffective. By pigeon-holing your training initiative as purely live instructor-led or on-demand, you'll miss valuable benefits of each modality. Here are 5 reasons why blended learning works well, and maybe best of all.

1. MEET LEARNERS ON THEIR LEVEL
Not all training participants are created equal and corralling people with diverse learning styles into one learning modality results in success for some and failure for others. **A blended solution meets a variety of learning styles and personality orientations.** Research shows the vast majority of employees either prefer in-person training alone or a combination of virtual and in-person training. Very few prefer a complete online experience.[5] And the 2010 U.S. Department of Education Report shows that in "studies contrasting blends of online and face-to-face instruction with conventional face-to-face classes, blended instruction has been more effective."

2. THE VALUE OF TRAINING LIES IN THE IDEA NOT THE MODALTY
The value of training always lies in the idea. **Above all else, the content needs to be fresh, the skills need to be relevant, and the problems the material solves have to be serious.** Anything short of this—no matter how clever the delivery method or high-tech the tools—simply isn't worth the investment.

3. SCALE LEARNING ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION
Equipped with traditional classroom training, live instructor-led online classrooms, and on-demand learning, L&D professionals have the tools to meet learners when and where learning will be most powerful. While the classroom environment is conducive to focused learning, it's also removed from the equipment, processes, and materials employees use on the job. And for many, lack of hands-on experience can be a learning obstacle. Classroom learning is also unrealistic for shift workers or geographically diverse teams. **A blended approach ensures all employee populations—regardless of schedules, location, or learning demands—can learn and retain the same skills.**

4. TECHNOLOGY QUEUES LEARNING
When trainers take a "flipped classroom" approach and use on-demand tools like video, benchmark quizzes, and surveys to introduce forthcoming principles and skills, **they give the learner a head start on skill development.** This online preparation is later reinforced when learners come together in small groups where verbal, social, and face-to-face feedback elements of the training can occur.

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5. TECHNOLOGY REINFORCES LEARNING

When used as a follow-on tool, online/on-demand training can add new insights and push participants to higher levels of performance. On-demand videos, articles, and digital reminders are vital tools for using and mastering new skills. And social communities and forums that help learners discuss what is and isn't working, create a support community for skill mastery.

☑ Tips to Make Blended Training Effective

- **MAINTAIN MOMENTUM**
  Regardless of the delivery format, don't put too much time between learning sessions. While spaced learning is beneficial, too much down time slows momentum and eliminates engagement. People tend to quickly forget what they learned if not given queues, homework assignments, and quick follow-up.

"Classes aren't going away. E-learning isn't going away. Coaching definitely isn't going away. **Microlearning isn't a replacement for your current learning strategy. It's an enhancement.** By applying microlearning principles, you can determine the best possible ways to use each of the tools in your training toolkit. Some may change. Others may stay the same. Overall, your impact on the business will be substantially improved by incorporating microlearning into your overall learning and support strategy."

– JD Dillon, Chief Learning Architect, Axonify

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About Crucial Conversations Online

Crucial Conversations Online takes VitalSmarts award-winning dialogue skills of top performers on-demand. The course utilizes the latest instructional design behind modern learning to deliver a flexible, social, and interactive experience that translates into real behavior change. When blended with the live, instructor-led course, Crucial Conversations Online can meet the diverse and unique needs of any workforce.

Crucial Conversations Online offers 10–12 hours of instruction, recommended to be consumed 2–3 hours per week over four weeks. Crucial Conversations Online is designed to reach the modern learner with bite-sized learning modules, social learning and reinforcement, and ease of access. Users learn through self-paced activities focused on observing and recognizing the skills, and then applying those skills to a crucial conversation of their own.

Learn more at vitalsmarts.com/crucialconversationsonline.

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