

Taking It Online

BUILDING A VIRTUAL LEARNING PRACTICE FOR ORGANIZATIONS.

How companies can shift their training and development efforts to virtual learning to accommodate remote workers and various learning styles.





Introduction

Virtual training was becoming more commonplace even before COVID-19. With the onset of the pandemic, organizations scrambled to keep up with learning and development with a workforce that had shifted to a work from home model.

Companies cobbled together Zoom training or uploaded materials to their intranet sites to train on the fly, but the result was often the digital equivalent of post-it notes on a monitor.

Now that the workplace is returning to normal, organizations are considering the place of Zoom and other virtual training in their training programs.



What are Common Types of Virtual Learning?

There is no shortage of virtual learning options. A combination of delivery methods is often the best choice when developing a program. Consider which of these is the best fit for your organization.

BLENDDED LEARNING

While blended learning has looked different over the years – it is a well-proven method for effective learning and training at all levels of corporate education. Blended learning presents learning material in a structured manner that traditionally includes some sort of face time with an instructor in addition to other learning delivery methods like videos, online reading, peer-to-peer learning, and hands-on practice. This method is easily adapted to remote work situations with the rise of widely available interactive video platforms like Zoom, Teams, and Highfive.

SYNCHRONOUS VS. ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Synchronous (real time) training is what most people think of when referring to virtual training. It does have its advantages. Synchronous training provides real-time interaction, allowing learners to ask questions and the instructor to observe participants. When learners look confused, trainers can offer immediate clarification. The downside of this method is it can be inefficient if the same training is offered over and over.

Asynchronous training is helpful for learners with different time zones, schedules, or work obligations. Learners can check in on their own time and progress at their own pace. Training can be created with the intent of delivering it asynchronously or synchronous training can be recorded and reused.





MICRO-LEARNING VS. MACRO-LEARNING

Studies have shown that people retain information better when it's delivered in manageable chunks. That's what makes micro-learning such a valuable addition to your training strategy. Micro-learning allows you to deliver essential training immediately. It can be accessed through AI or on-demand videos that address a specific question.

Macro-learning offers a big picture overview that can put task-based training in context. While micro-learning teaches how to perform tasks, macro-learning teaches why they are important. Micro-learning can be instrumental in professional development and required engagement and significant time.

LEARNER-LED TRAINING

Whichever learning option your organization chooses, learner-led training can be a valuable part of your strategy. Whether it's micro-learning on the fly or professional development, learner buy-in is essential.

Training can be more engaging and better retained through delivery methods such as mobile applications and gamification that learners can use at their own pace.



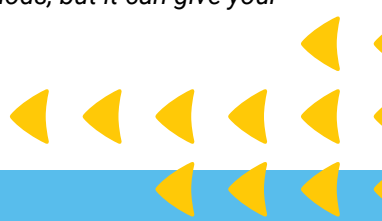
Why Adopt a Virtual Learning Model?

In a workforce that's likely to remain at least partially remote for the foreseeable future, virtual learning options are essential. Even companies that don't embrace remote work as a day-to-day business model can use virtual learning on snow days or other emergency situations.

THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ADVANTAGE

- » **Available on demand.** Learners can take a few moments of downtime to add to their knowledge base or get a quick refresher on a topic.
- » **Accommodates a variety of learning styles.** Visual learners can watch video training, auditory learners can focus on listening and linguistic learners can read transcripts to retain materials.
- » **Simple to keep up to date.** Unless you are producing video with high production values, updating curriculum is as simple as revising the deck or script.
- » **Increase employee engagement.** Synchronous virtual learning can be treated as a conversation. Soliciting input throughout training can keep learners engaged and improve retention. Trainers can repeat parts of lessons that are unclear or confusing.
- » **Close knowledge and skill gaps.** Virtual learning can be customized to the needs of the learners, spending more or less time on what needs to be reinforced or quickly bringing learners up to speed when things change.

Virtual learning doesn't have to replace other methods, but it can give your program additional flexibility.



Steps to Creating a Virtual Learning Strategy

Companies looking to add virtual learning or to shift current delivery methods to virtual learning should create a strategy to ensure they are approaching the change mindfully.

CONVERT STOPGAP MEASURES TO A FULL VIRTUAL STRATEGY.

During the pandemic, many companies converted some or all of their in-person training to virtual training. This approach was often reactive rather than proactive and may not have followed best practices. Discuss pros and cons to determine how to move forward.

ANALYZE LEARNING GAPS

Because so much virtual training in the last year was on the fly, delivery may not have been consistent across the organization. Talk to managers or conduct an employee survey to determine what training is required or desired.

GAIN LEADERSHIP BUY-IN

Not everyone sees the value of virtual learning. Getting top-down buy-in can make a big difference to adoption throughout the organization. Approach leadership teams with hard data and a problem-solving approach to get them onboard.



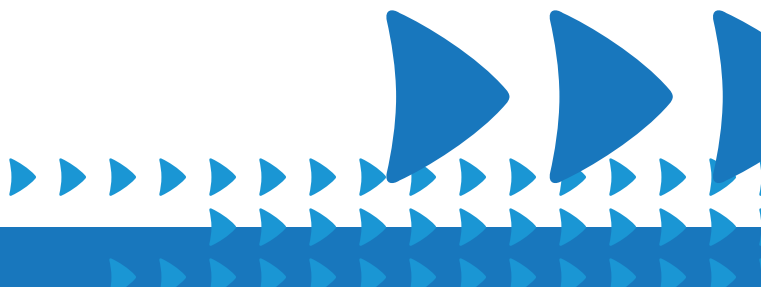
A background image showing a person's hands using a laptop. Overlaid on the image are several circular icons connected by lines, representing various business and technology concepts: a laptop, a globe, a gear, a shopping cart, a document, a bar chart, a group of people, a truck, and a network diagram. The icons are white and semi-transparent, set against a blue-tinted background.

DEVELOP A CONTENT STRATEGY

Consider what training your organization needs – from onboarding to management training to specialized professional development. Create a virtual delivery strategy for each. Onboarding could be conducted in a large group setting. Professional development might work better as self-paced asynchronous training. Management training might work best as one-on-one video-mentoring.

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM

Each trainer and leader have their own strengths and weaknesses. Consider what each individual is willing to take on. Some may not want to appear on video but are willing to help write scripts. One of the best features of virtual learning is the ability to consolidate redundant or repetitive training. Consider the time that could be saved by pointing employees to training they can access when they need it.



Best Practices For Virtual Learning:

Virtual learning succeeds most when you begin with the end in mind. What is the goal of your virtual training program? Moving people through a career path from entry level to management? Helping employees gain acumen in their individual roles?

Create a learning roadmap. Learners can each go through onboarding and progress through job-specific trainings as needed. Some can ultimately move through to management training.

Audit learner access to technology to be sure they have what they need to participate in virtual learning. Measure, track and analyze participation and progress.

Divide content into short, focused units. Learners are less resistant to training and retain material better when they know they can fit training in between their other duties. (It's good for productivity, too.)

When employees can hop into a short training as needed, they can view it as a break rather than an interruption, especially if you take the time to make each training engaging and informative.



How can Clarity Help?

Clarity has nearly 30 years of expertise managing projects touching every element of learning and talent development, including instructional design, eLearning, live facilitation, LMS, organizational development, project management and change management. We provide individuals and teams of consultants ready to deploy. We can adapt, customize and scale our services to your needs. We have successfully completed over 10,000 consulting engagements.

Here's just one example of our virtual training success:

SUCCESS STORY

Clarity helped one of the largest professional service companies transition their in-person training programs to virtual instructor-led training (vILT).

THE CHALLENGE

The client wanted to shift a variety of training programs including onboarding training, to virtual delivery. They simply didn't have the bandwidth to make this change on their own.

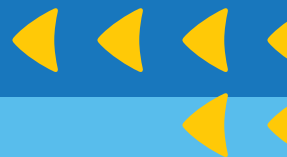
THE SOLUTION

Clarity worked closely with the company's facilitators to successfully convert many training sessions to a virtual environment. Our team of consultants managed communications and staffing of facilitators and provided support during training sessions including managing questions and surveys.

THE RESULTS

Going virtual allowed our client to increase the number of training programs offered and conduct them on a more frequent basis. Our client remarked that Clarity's work generated significant cost savings that freed up a significant amount of their training delivery budget for additional programs.

[READ FULL CASE STUDY](#)




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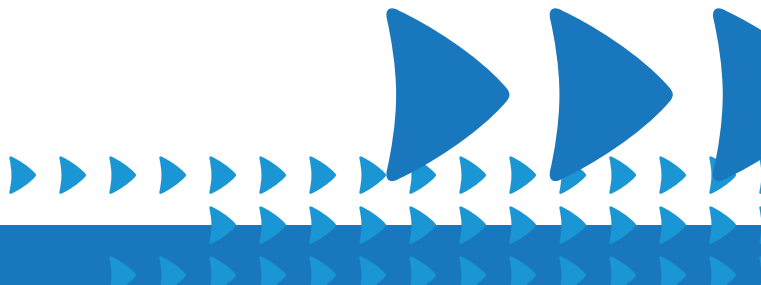
Clarity has nearly 30 years of expertise in placing elite learning and development professionals in high-demand positions in large, global organizations.

There is a reason why over eighty percent of Fortune 500 firms rely on Clarity to staff their projects. Our background, skilled consultants, and broad range of experience across industries and sectors help set us apart from the competition.

CONTACT US:

 www.clarityconsultants.com

 1-800-330-6558





Resources



1. <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/virtual-learning.htm>
2. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/beyond-hiring-how-companies-are-reskilling-to-address-talent-gaps>
3. <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/online-training.htm>
4. <https://www.wired.com/story/how-to-make-online-learning-work/>
5. <https://elearningindustry.com/8-steps-create-successful-virtual-training-strategy>
6. <https://elearningindustry.com/build-digital-learning-culture-organization>
7. <https://emergenetics.com/blog/best-practices-creating-successful-virtual-learning-program/>
8. <https://www.areadevelopment.com/laborEducation/Q3-2020/new-strategies-for-learning-and-development-in-virtual-world.shtml>
9. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/leaders-championing-virtual-learning-movement-dan-schawbel/>

