

Managing Knowledge in Internet Time:

Rapid e-Learning Maximizes the Time/Value of Mission Oriented Training

CRA Reports

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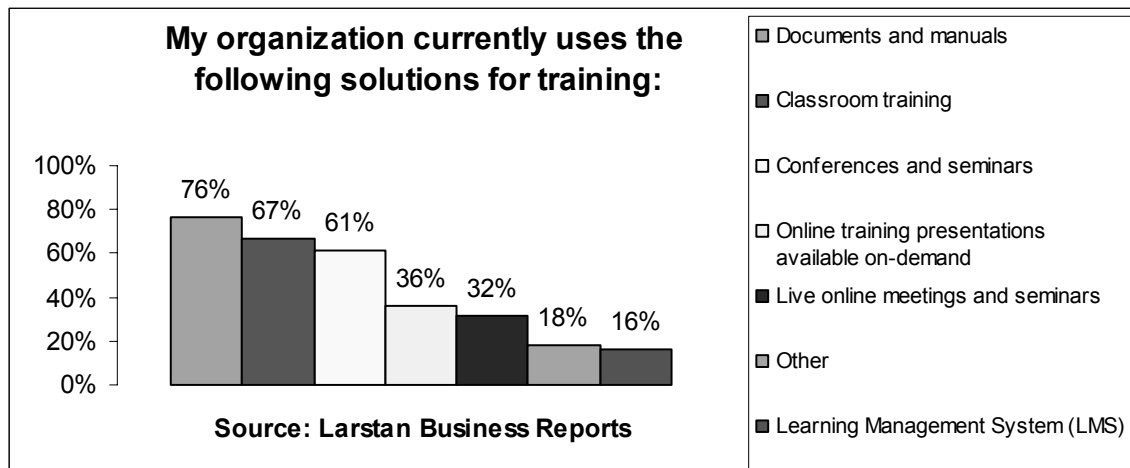
By
Lane F. Cooper
Cooper Research Associates

On any given day, companies experience changes inside and outside of their corporate borders that affect the way they go to market, manage their operations or comply with new regulatory mandates. In fact, it is an article of faith among many CEOs that corporate success is often a function of responding to these changes quickly, effectively and comprehensively.

It is one reason analysts at IDC expect corporate America to spend over \$46 billion dollars a year on corporate training—including IT and business skills education—by 2006. An increasing share of this training budget will be allocated to e-learning initiatives.

“Organizations will continue to both replace and augment traditional forms of training with e-learning for reasons of efficiency, convenience and instructionally sound use of delivery mediums.” – Cushing Anderson, e-learning analyst, IDC.

This observation is borne out in a survey of e-learning professionals in 85 Fortune 500 companies conducted by **Cooper Research Associates** and **Larstan Business Reports**. While 36 percent of respondents said they were currently using online presentations available on-demand and 32 percent reported using live online meetings and seminars to educate employees and maintain skills, 85 percent of respondents indicated plans to expand the role of e-learning in their organizations over the next 6-12 months.



But as executives link corporate training initiatives to developments that affect their operations, key distinctions are emerging between Generic Training initiatives and Mission Oriented e-learning imperatives.

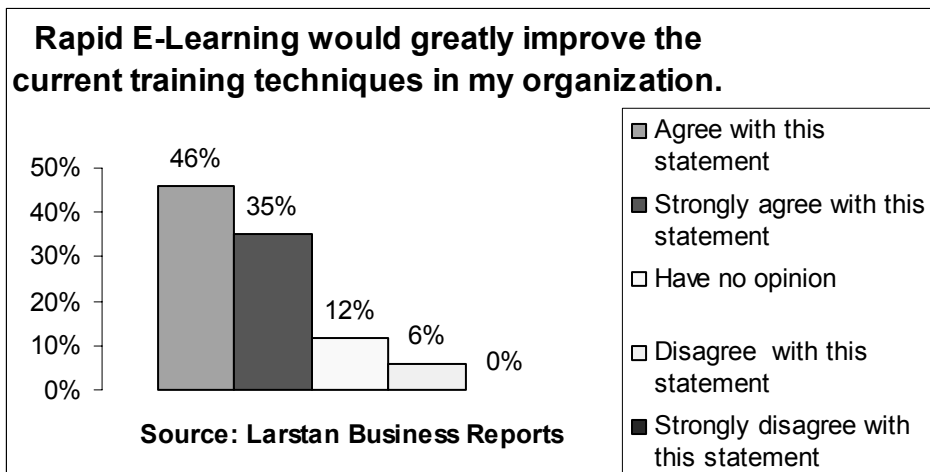
- Generic Training addresses issues such as sexual harassment, equal opportunity employment rules, general management skills development, or specific product competency development (learning advanced Excel functionality, for instance). The nature of the curriculum is such that it does not need to vary from one organization to another. The content is relatively static and not organization-specific.
- Mission Oriented Training initiatives, by contrast, strive to keep a community of interest abreast of changing developments that affect the way stakeholders perform their job functions. The objective here is to put events—such as new product or service launches, updates or changes to government rules that govern their behavior, or changes that must be managed as a result of a merger or acquisition—into an immediate, actionable context that allows people to advance the organizational mission. It is by definition dynamic and specific to specific companies, departments within companies, and even job functions within departments.

“That is why organizations today are looking for ways to provide wider and faster access to rich training and information. There is growing appreciation for rapid e-learning based on solid evidence that cost savings and risk avoidance can be achieved with effective e-learning strategies.” – Bryan Chapman, e-learning consultant, Brandon-Hall.

...Rapid e-Learning Defined

Rapid e-learning streamlines learning by focusing on immediate and specific business training needs throughout the entire learning process: from content authoring through course delivery, and on to follow through and measurement. Specifically, a rapid e-learning solution accelerates and simplifies the training process by using online technology, automated applications and by leveraging common business tools. Companies looking to successfully implement Mission Oriented Training programs must consequently adopt rapid e-learning (REL) strategies in order to produce materials that can be:

- prepared and/or packaged in a timely manner;
- tailored to the specific information needs of the audience;
- delivered over a medium that is easy to access by users; and



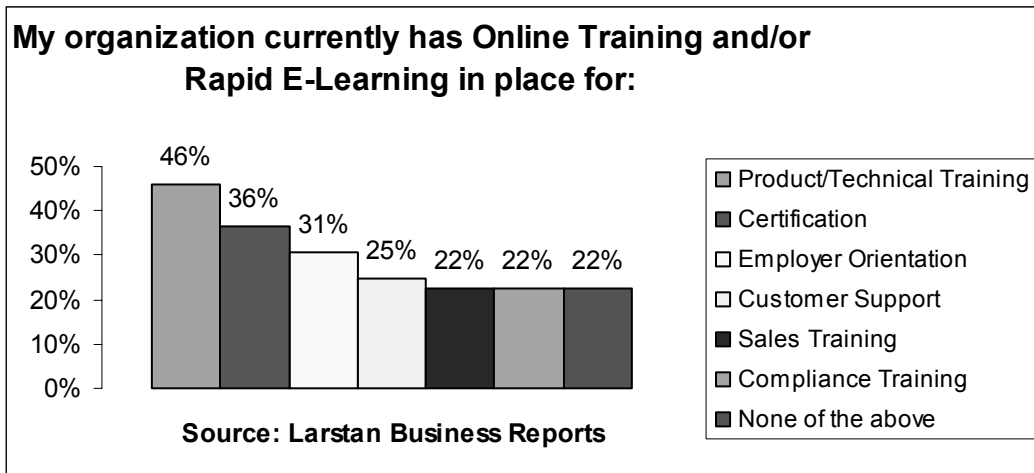
- tracked by course trainers/administrators as well as line of business managers who depend on the training to improve operational performance.

...Larstan Survey Supports REL Trend

Over 80 percent of respondents reported that REL strategies would make a significant contribution to training efforts in their organizations.

Respondents also identified a growing array of company-specific (or mission-oriented) training activities that can benefit from effectively deployed REL strategies: from product and technical training, to internal certification initiatives, to compliance training.

An important question that arises is: how should companies go about developing an effective REL strategy?



...Operational Imperatives

There are four basic steps to implementing a Mission Oriented Training strategy that is effectively aligned with company objectives.

- 1.) Create Content and Leverage Various Sources of Information.** In an overwhelming majority of cases, the basic content that is needed to develop REL program already exists in the form of PowerPoint presentations, white papers and other materials developed in response to the emergence of the issue. The key here is to have a systematic process for assessing the inventory of knowledge that is already in place, and tapping external sources of information (such as analyst reports and industry association communiqués) that can support the curriculum and make it more authoritative and interesting to absorb.

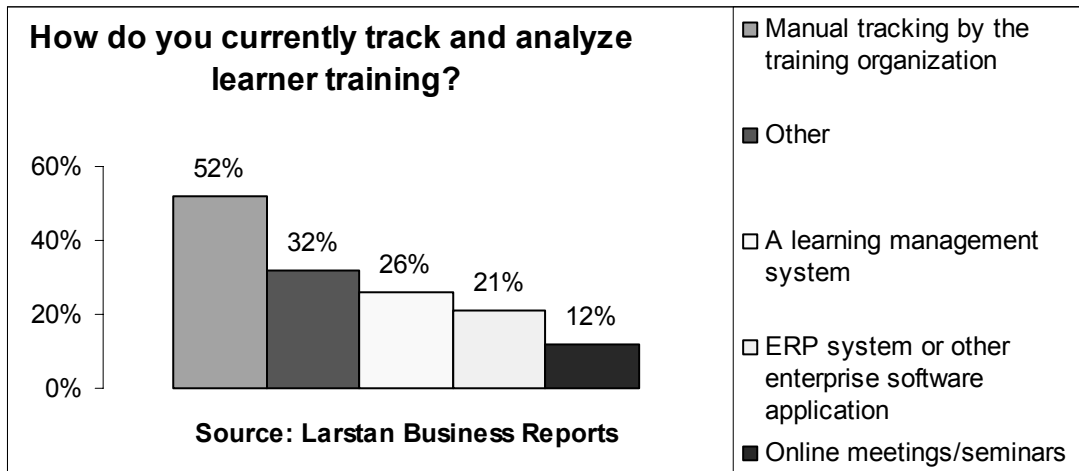
According to analysts at Brandon-Hall, leading e-learning implementers are closely aligning their course development to corporate knowledge management systems and other enterprise-wide initiatives to make online courses as timely, relevant and effective as possible. This is critical to ensuring high usage rates among users.

- 2.) Deliver Multimedia Content in an Accessible Manner.** Countless usability studies have concluded that multimedia presentations have a proven ability to deliver the maximum amount of content in a minimum amount of time while assuring the highest recall rates. The key is to make this content available in a user-friendly manner, using familiar navigation and access techniques (ie. PowerPoint presentation in a browser environment) and resist temptations to over design the course.

Experts point out that it is important to keep two critical things in mind here: make sure that the courseware is filling information gaps which, when filled, will result in making users more productive or aware; also keep in mind the technical competence and attention span of the audience, so that users do not get frustrated or intimidated by the interface.

- 3.) Follow Through...Follow Through...Follow Through.** Do not leave participation to chance. A REL initiative is useless if people do not attend or fully consume the curriculum. The key here is to use technology to automate the process of: informing stakeholders that the course is available; marketing the course to make it something users can look forward to; inviting specific individuals to participate individuals; and ensuring that the entire curriculum was consumed and absorbed by users.

The main difference between live and on-line training materials lies in who controls the experience. In a live presentation, the presenter holds the room and largely controls the behavior of those present in the room throughout the duration of the session. That control reverses in an online environment.



Experts cite a 3:1 ratio between the time it should take to deliver a live presentation and the corresponding amount of time that is feasible to ensure complete participation in the archived online version of the same session. This makes it imperative that trainers or course administrators test, quiz or otherwise determine that the material was consumed and that knowledge was in fact transferred in the online effort.

- 4.) Map the Effort to the Mission.** It is often said—though rarely done—that you should “track metrics” because you can’t manage what you don’t measure.

Beyond measuring participation in a training course and ensuring that people in fact learned something in the process, REL trainers and line of business managers and executives need to find ways to establish links between the investment in learning and operational improvements.

This means new product training should positively affect sales and product development, new safety training should result in fewer injuries and lowered risks, and customer service training should be linked to more satisfied customers and more rapid resolution of conflicts. Accountability is the only way to ensure return on e-learning investments, and the leading users of REL make certain that their training efforts contribute to a solid business objective.

...The Role of REL

While executing any one element of Mission Oriented Training effectively (albeit tactically) will bring about benefits to the organization, there is a growing body of evidence indicating that a strategic approach—by which we mean an implementation that follows through on each of the operational imperatives in an integrated manner—has a force-multiplier effect on e-learning investments. They also create unintended collateral benefits that accumulate as a result of keen insights earned from systematically going through the entire disciplined process.

An effective rapid e-learning strategy provides a working framework that accelerates the rate at which all of the steps described above can be implemented, shortening the “time-to-benefit” for both the intended and unintended outcomes.

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Founded in 1999, Presedia, Inc. is a leading provider of rapid e-learning solutions for online training, sales, marketing and corporate communications. Unlike other systems that require the use of unfamiliar, complicated applications, Presedia offers an end-to-end e-learning platform that fully leverages Microsoft's universal PowerPoint application to create, deliver and track time-critical multimedia information.

The Presedia Express™ solution enables users to quickly create interactive multimedia presentations combining slides, audio, animations, quizzes and surveys for delivery on a wide range of platforms and devices. Companies currently using Presedia to simplify and accelerate learning, include Avaya Communication, Hitachi Data Systems, Novell, Mentor Graphics and KPMG Consulting to name just a few.

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