

Briefings

Learning 3.0

Dramatically Reducing Communication and Training Costs with Short-Form Professional Video

Summary

It is common wisdom that “when budgets get tight, training and communication are the first things to go.” In times of organizational stress, these are just not seen as critical. Unfortunately, while the resources can be eliminated, the need to develop and inform new and existing employees never goes away.

The issue isn't with these concept themselves, the problem is that organizations are still relying on traditional classroom/meetings and e-learning approaches that are too expensive and inefficient for today's business environment.

Progressive organizations have found that they can “have their cake and eat it too.” They are dramatically *cutting* training and communications costs while *increasing* the amount of content provided ... and experiencing *better business results* than ever before.

These organizations have accomplished this by embracing a key element of Web 2.0 technology—short form video. This isn't YouTube-style amateur video, but highly effective professional video providing targeted content that can be quickly and easily developed and deployed.

The result is a *strategic competitive advantage in time to market of information and skills* by creating a “framework for execution” that readily connects organizational content sources (HR, legal, marketing, sales, safety, etc.) to organizational constituencies (employees, partners, sales channels, customers, etc.)

In addition to the performance benefits of this “Learning 3.0” approach, executives are also able to dramatically reduce expenditures for training and communication, and even outsource major portions of these functions. The result is one of the few opportunities where organizations can actually spend less money and get better business results.



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Learning 1.0: The Traditional Classroom Approach

The typical organization's approach to learning is little changed from the days of the one-room schoolhouse. Teacher-speaking/student-listening ("sage on the stage") is the primary mode of traditional business training. Interaction between the trainer and student is viewed as an essential element for learning.

The problem is that today's organizations can no longer afford to send people to class.

- It's only a single event. There is no refresh learning required to retain knowledge, and further meetings to cover updates aren't feasible.
- For most jobs (such as sales), the hidden opportunity costs of being off the job dwarf total training costs.
- More money is spent on airlines, hotels, and meals—all completely non-value added—than on the meeting itself. And those costs are rising.
- Traveling for face-to-face events counters efforts to be "green."
- Days worth of content is too much to absorb and retain, and spending days to get "at least a couple of good ideas" is inefficient.
- There's too much delay between learning and application on the job.

The classroom/meeting model is no longer effective. It is incredibly time inefficient, no one wants to travel, and it's too costly.

Learning 2.0: The Traditional e-Learning Approach

There are documented reasons why current computer-based or Web-based learning approaches also have not generated the anticipated benefits.

- The easy to create, voice-over, slide-flipping approach—whether a course or a live Webcast—is boring. Employees dislike it and don't learn from it. (Be honest. You get your e-mail or do other work during these programs, don't you?)
- 60 and 90-minute courses are too long. (According to research, learners have only about 11 minutes of uninterrupted time to concentrate on a task.)
- The cycle time to create these types of programs is weeks and months instead of hours and days, i.e., too long. Updating these courses is difficult and expensive.
- Organizations must master development tool programming and provide complex and expensive IT-based delivery systems.
- Learning management systems require licensing fees and IT resources and support, and time-consuming administration by managers and users.
- None of the typical e-learning courses can be deployed as-is on mobile devices, i.e., phones, iPods and MP3 players, PDAs, and route handhelds. This development for mobile devices will have to be redone from scratch ... thereby needlessly doubling or tripling overall costs.

While e-learning in general has many advantages, implementation approaches to date are not generating the desired results.



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The Learning 3.0 Approach

Organizations looking to dramatically transform their training and communication functions and improve results have set the following goals:

- Reduce the “time to market of information.” Utilize engaging, TV-familiar “instructor over PowerPoint” short-form video content that makes content fast to create and easy to deploy, and can be readily delivered in multiple languages.
- Minimize classroom training. Keep people on the job.
- Position the Training department (if one is necessary at all) as a learning enabler versus “the training function.” Resize or outsource the training department accordingly.
- Leverage line department subject matter experts (SMEs) for content and actual delivery versus communication and training departments, where possible.
- Build in user-generated content capabilities, ala the “corporate YouTube.”
- Use e-learning to teach and inform. Leverage supervisors and managers for real-world “apply” review and coaching on the job.
- Put content in a format that people *want* to experience, i.e., short form video.
- Keep programs short, so that people have time to complete them.
- Focus content on a single task. Make it easy to remember.
- Make content relevant. Deliver immediate benefits to the learner.
- Keep learning fun. Maintain the personal element and the “live classroom” feel.
- Measure mastery of the material and track actual business results.
- Use common PC media tools for development.
- Eliminate complex software and minimize IT involvement.
- Use an externally hosted software solution where possible.

With this Learning 3.0 approach, organizations can actually deliver more training events to learners, generate higher retention of content, produce improved business results, and do all this at reduced cost. Large organizations have even accomplished all this *without any dedicated training resources whatsoever*.

Examples of Learning 3.0

Pepsi-Cola bottlers have banded together to create a leading edge Learning 3.0 resource, the Pepsi Bottler Online Campus. The Campus currently has 47 subscribers ranging in size from less than 30 employees at a single location to over 12,000 employees internationally. The Campus offers over 300 short form video programs in such subjects as leadership, management, supervision, sales, delivery and merchandising, administration, safety, HR compliance, process improvement, products and programs, software training, etc.

The Campus is an externally hosted solution, with programs available over the Internet on a nano-learning management system that provides secure access, viewer tracking, completion testing, and viewer reporting.

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Bottlers utilize the Campus contents in a variety of ways. Employees take initial training programs either individually, with workgroup team members, or during sales meetings. They then scan the videos for refresh learning as needed, and quickly review content for performance support. Managers and supervisors view content with subordinates during one-on-one coaching sessions. In all, there are approximately 30,000 programs viewed monthly, either individually or in teams.

As reported in a Bersin & Associates study of the Pepsi Online Campus, bottlers have experienced measurable business results from the training ... better retail execution audit scores, accelerations in sales increases, reduced product returns, reduced accidents and workers compensation, reduced turnover, and higher employee and customer satisfaction.

For several of the larger bottlers, the Pepsi Online Campus is a strategic part of their training and communication function. For many of the mid-sized and smaller bottlers, the Campus is their complete outsourced training solution, and they have no dedicated training function.

Another leading-edge Learning 3.0 practitioner is Golden Harvest Seeds. Before being acquired by Syngenta, Golden Harvest had no dedicated training resources for its network of 100 field salespeople and 2,400 farmer-dealers distributed through the U.S. The head of sales and one regional manager spearheaded a Learning 3.0 initiative to drive key corporate goals of acquiring new customers and generating increased sales.

The result was a series of short form video sales training programs. As reported in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *St. Louis Business Journal*, new accounts went from 500 the previous year to 4,500 after training, and sales increased nearly 22 percent to a new company record after five years of decline. It also took three less calls per customer to close orders.

Golden Harvest currently has over 100 online short form video programs available to its sales employees and channel partners, and is continually expanding the content. The entire effort is still spearheaded by the regional manager, with about one-third of the content coming from Golden Harvest SMEs and the remainder coming from the outsourcing/hosting partner.

In both these examples, organizations are delivering levels of training and communication that would be impossible to do using traditional classroom or e-learning methods. Their approach is also delivering a strategic competitive advantage in time to market of information and skills.

Common Objections to Learning 3.0

Isn't classroom learning, when possible, still the best method?

The actual research results are surprising. In a paper accepted in a peer-reviewed academic journal, Shachar and Neumann tested this hypothesis and determined that educators may need to consider a major philosophical shift:



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“Based on 86 studies and using learning outcome data from over 15,000 participating students, the results of the meta-analysis show a strong positive trend indicating that distance education (DE) is an effective form of instruction. *This analysis demonstrates that students engaged in DE academically outperform their face-to-face (F2F) counterparts.* [Emphasis ours.] We have been focusing all along on the question: ‘Is DE suitable for all students?’ The results of this study may raise the inverse question: ‘Is F2F suitable for all students?’ and may begin a paradigm shift in the way postsecondary education is pedagogically conceptualized.”

An indication that this shift is currently under weigh is that there are now over 1,000 regionally accredited distance education degree programs available—and from major universities—with more being continually added.

Video is a passive medium. It doesn't provide for interaction.

Many training professionals equate interaction with conversation or mouse clicks. The key element of learning is *mental engagement*. With the proper instructional design, short form video provides high levels of mental engagement ala play-along-at-home TV programs such as *Jeopardy!*, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*, or *Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?*

Training is for training professionals.

SMEs typically reside outside of the training department, either as line personnel or consultants. Learning 3.0 organizations reduce training department costs by converting trainers to learning facilitators who connect SMEs with constituents, help SMEs with instructional and graphics design, and coach studio skills. In the Golden Harvest campus mentioned above, nearly half of the content is delivered by line professionals versus (outsourced) training professionals.

Organizations need a full Learning Management System (LMS) for e-learning.

Short form video is a perfect application for a SaaS (software as a service) outsourced solution. Internal LMSs are typically enterprise IT-level projects, and involve costs for IT implementation and support, program licenses, and maintenance fees. In addition, many LMSs are complex to use and navigate. Managers want to do as little LMS administration as possible, and line departments want something the can provide training, testing, tracking and reporting with as simple an interface as possible.

Conclusion

Organizations that are willing to embrace new Learning 3.0 technologies and be aggressive in modernizing their training and communication functions are reaping big rewards. They are generating cost savings while increasing the amount of content reaching their constituents, and are seeing that information utilized to drive improved business results. The result is a “framework for execution” that provides a strategic competitive advantage.

“This analysis demonstrates that students engaged in distance education academically outperform their face-to-face counterparts. We have been focusing all along on the question: ‘Is distance education suitable for all students?’ The results of this study may raise the inverse question: ‘Is face-to-face suitable for all students?’ “



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About ej4

ej4 is a leading-edge, rapid deployment e-learning provider headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri USA. ej4 changes behaviors with highly targeted content that is cost effective, delivered in an engaging way, and that people actually use to achieve measurable results.

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