

TRAINING EVOLUTION

The current and future state of corporate learning modalities

The corporate learning space is rapidly evolving thanks, in part, to the emergence of new learning delivery methods. Technology is transforming traditional corporate learning as much as it has been changing traditional universities, where online enrollment continues to climb. From social learning to gamification, the modes of learning delivery are adapting and being used in tandem to meet the needs of today's workforce. New technology can increase learner engagement while decreasing business costs. Yet, how does technology affect the use of classroom learning? Which use cases fit mobile learning best? What are common obstacles of adopting and deploying new learning modalities?

In the 2015 *Chief Learning Officer* Learning Modalities survey, Human Capital Media Advisory Group, the research arm of *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, partnered with The Training Associates (TTA) to explore learning modalities in the corporate space. Over 400 survey respondents, responsible for learning and training in their organizations, answered questions on use cases, success stories, and challenges related to a variety of learning modalities. The study revealed which learning modalities organizations use, why certain modalities are favored over others, and what modalities organizations will adopt in the future.

KEY FINDINGS

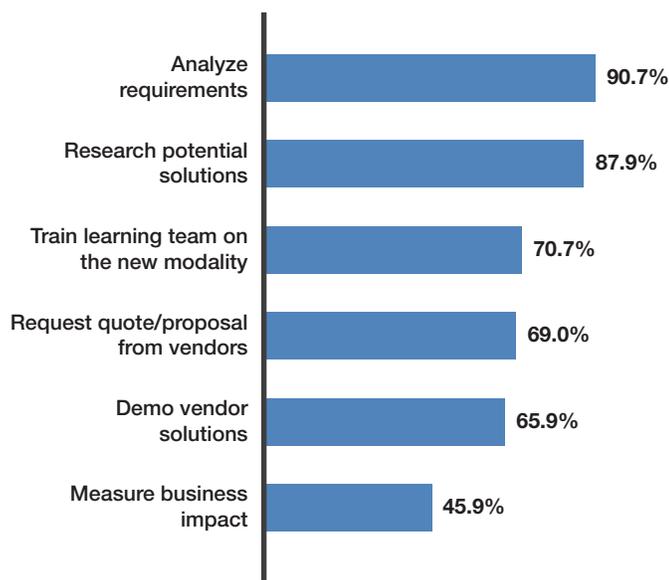
- **Instructor-led training (ILT) is being blended with technological solutions:** Instructor-led training is the top learning modality, and its use is increasingly being augmented with other modalities for maximum reach.
- **Different learning modalities drive different outcomes:** Technology-based modalities are employed for their accessibility and potential as cost savers, while in-person learning provided by instructors, mentors, and coaches is used to maximize knowledge transfer.
- **Challenges vary by learning modality:** Organizations struggle to find enough qualified instructors for ILT and mentoring programs. Technology-based learning modalities present new difficulties for learning and development teams, including knowledge deficits surrounding the development and implementation of technology-enabled training, applying the appropriate modality for the business need, and how to increase employee adoption.

¹ Allen, I. (2012). 2012. *Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States*. Online Learning Consortium.

Adoption of New Learning Modalities

The decision to develop or adopt any new learning modality starts with key stakeholders, typically the CEO, CLO, vice president of learning, and other business-line executives. Organizations assess many different factors in the initial development stage, such as the requirements needed as well as potential solutions to organizational challenges. At this stage, organizations that outsource their learning content will solicit quotes or demos from vendors, exploring all training solution options. This strategic preplanning step helps to determine which modality will fit the company's particular needs (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Measures taken when adopting a new learning modality



2 Ambrose, J., and Oglivie, J. (2010). "Multiple Modes in Corporate Learning: Propelling Business IQ with Formal, Informal and Social Learning." *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, v14 n2 p9-18

3 Wooler, A. (2014). "The LMS is Dead...Long Live the LMS!" *Inside Learning Technologies and Skills*. October 2014, p. 33-34.

What to Develop or Adopt?

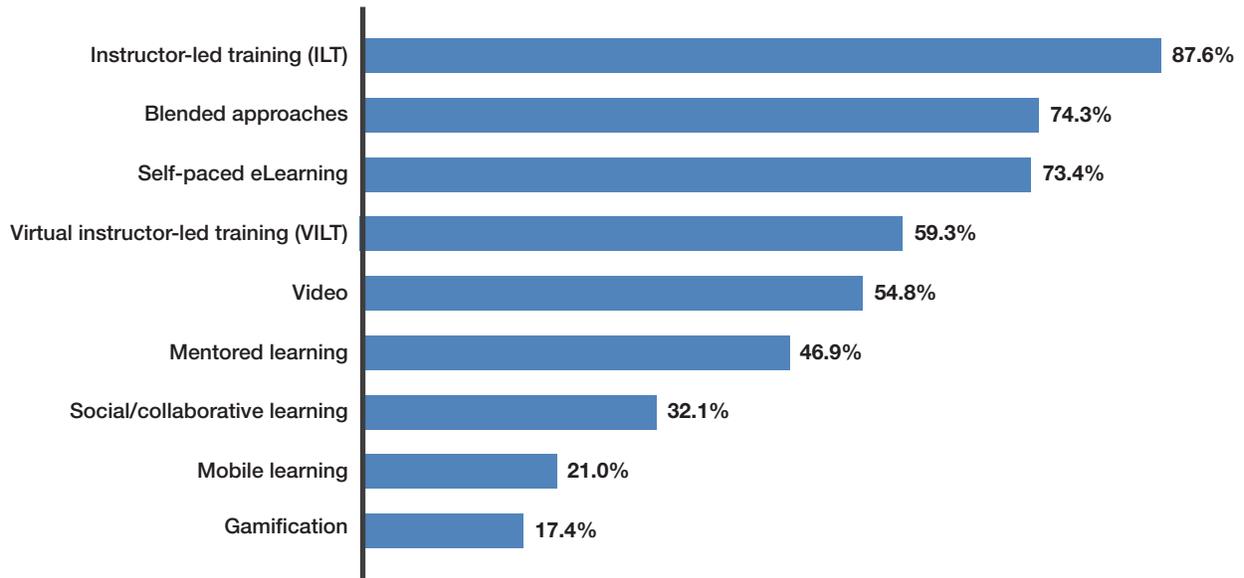
Historically, corporate learning has taken place in the classroom, with as much as 76 percent of all learning being delivered as instructor-led training (ILT). The viability of ILT as a training method has been called into question with every new modality entering the market. However, this tried and true modality — though pronounced dead or dying for many years — continues to rank as a top learning modality, used at 87 percent of respondent organizations. Examining the use cases among respondents shows why ILT continues to thrive. Learning professionals believe that ILT programs can engage learners and provide knowledge transfer better than other learning modalities.

"We will be using [instructor-led training] to increase skills, engagement, and realistic feedback."

—L&D professional, midsized U.S. organization

Yet, while ILT remains a widespread and highly effective learning modality, it needs help to keep pace with the training demands of a geographically dispersed workforce and budget-conscious corporations. ILT can be expensive when compared with other, technology-based, modalities and requires employees to set aside a fixed amount of time to receive instruction — time that employees may not always have to spare. To better address the needs of the modern workforce, today's learning and development departments are branching out and enhancing ILT by adding technological components such as video or mobile training, to achieve a blended learning solution. Combining ILT with technology reduces the reliance on getting everyone together and offers training that can be delivered any time, consumed anywhere and provides cost savings to the business. Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of organizations take a blended approach to learning — augmenting ILT delivery with either a mobile, video, or social component. Blended approaches are now the second-highest modality style in use, just behind stand-alone ILT (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Top learning modalities

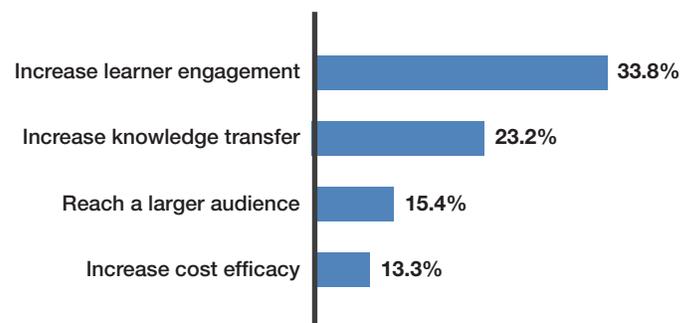


The rise of blended learning solutions can be attributed to the challenges of delivering successful ILT programs. Scheduling an ILT course requires learners to be in the same space at the same time, which isn't always possible in a highly dispersed workforce because of high direct implementation costs, such as maintaining designated facilities or paying employees' travel costs. Using a blended approach, a five-day ILT course can be slimmed down to three days, with the remainder of the learning pushed to video or mobile — reducing the amount of time employees are away from work and increasing productivity and cost savings for employers.

Blended solutions have many advantages over stand-alone modalities. Organizations employ blended solutions to increase employee engagement, teach new skills, and reach a large audience. While classroom training may help employees get the hands-on training they need, adding technological components to the ILT makes the training scalable and keeps employees engaged. By moving certain components of onsite training to technological modalities, employees will be more engaged and excited in the classroom (Figure 3).

87.6%
of respondents
use ILT as a primary
learning modality.

Figure 3: Primary Use Case for Blended Learning Solutions



“We needed to be able to deliver instructor-led training in remote locations without disrupting operations in those stores and without blowing the travel budget. The solution was a blend of video-based eLearning lessons and scenario-based online application activities, along with live webinars.”

—L&D professional, large global organization

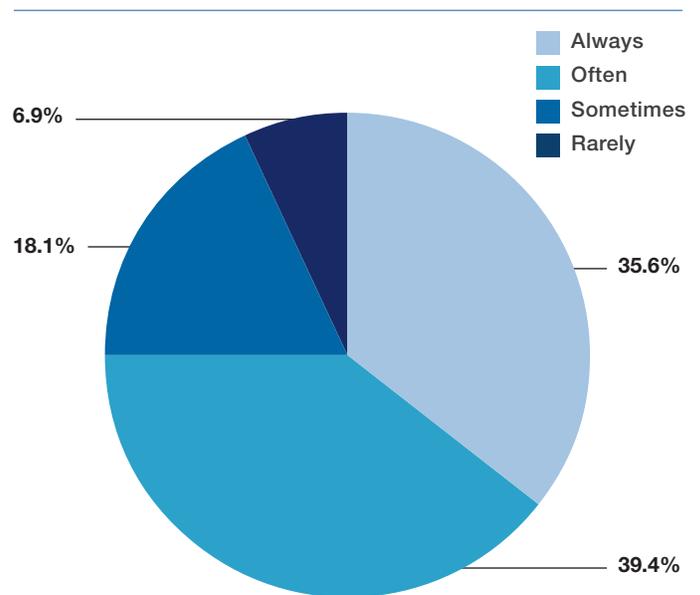
The Rise of Mobile Learning

Keeping employees up-to-date with safety- and compliance-related knowledge has been a primary driver for companies to adopt mobile learning as a modality. One in five organizations currently use mobile learning as a means of delivering this critical training because it is easily accessible to the learners, materials can be adapted quickly as regulations change, and it provides the option of testing out of the material, if required. Mobile learning has the advantage of saving the business time and money in everyday training, and its use will grow in the coming years. Nearly three-quarters (74.4 percent) of organizations anticipate delivering some of their eLearning programs (both ILT and self-paced learning) to mobile devices in the next 12 to 18 months.

Simultaneous Development Success

Delivering learning through a blended approach is one way of addressing concerns about finding time for training. Technology-based learning modalities are focused on just-in-time training that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, and allow learners to digest course material at their own pace. Organizations are also experiencing success by developing content for different learning approaches simultaneously. Two-thirds of organizations develop content for more than one modality simultaneously (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Organizations That Typically Develop the Same Content for More Than One Type of Learning Delivery



Of those organizations that practice simultaneous development, two-thirds (67.3 percent) develop content for blended learning in the initial planning stages of creating the primary learning modality. This simultaneous development affects an organization’s bottom line in several ways. While developing content for multiple delivery modes increases upfront content development costs, it decreases learning delivery costs. The secondary learning option (video, mobile, or other) can then be deployed to supplement in-person training, extend the trainings’ reach for geographically dispersed employees, and/or increase employee engagement — leading to higher productivity levels. Such time- and cost-saving benefits are important to organizations looking to make the most of their learning budgets.

74.4 percent of organizations will move eLearning programs to mobile in the next 18 months.

4 Human Capital Media (2015). *Learning Delivery Survey*.

5 Ibid.

“Our organization is large, widespread throughout the state ... We needed to find a way to deliver a new employee welcome in a way that was immediately available when someone was hired, didn’t require travel on the part of the employee or trainers, and didn’t require extensive time commitments on the part of the employees or agency leadership. Video welcome messages were adopted as the best way of meeting all needs.”

— L&D professional, large U.S. organization

Positive Outcomes

Regardless of the different types of learning modalities organizations deploy, they all have similar objectives — knowledge transfer, accessibility, and increased learner engagement. **Knowledge transfer** is the primary use case for in-person training (ILT, mentored learning). **Accessibility** — the ability to deliver learning that employees can access at their convenience — is the primary use case for self-paced, technological modalities (eLearning, video, mobile). **Increased learner engagement** is the primary use case for modalities that are either personal or competitive in nature (mentored learning, gamification, social, blended solutions). While VILT is a technological learning modality, often deployed for accessibility reasons, its primary use case is scalability (Figure 5). Because there’s still an instructor, VILT shares the knowledge transfer benefits of ILT but with the cost savings associated with other technological modalities.

“We use video to deliver instructor-led training. This way we are able to deliver SME training from our global entities to our employees without incurring travel costs and the delivery can be expedited so it is more timely. It also allows for a more personal experience for the learners.”

—HR professional, small global organization

Figure 5: Primary Use Case for Learning Modalities

Knowledge Transfer	ILT (44.6%) Mentored learning (40.4%)
Accessibility	eLearning (44.4%) Video (37.5%) Mobile (60.4%)
Learner Engagement	Mentored learning (40.4%) Gamification (68.9%) Social/collaborative (57.6%) Blended (33.8%)
Scalability	VILT (33.3%)

“We developed our own in-house mobile, microlearning platform that delivers ‘under 60 second’ videos focused on very tangible tools. The mobile aspect was critical because our team needs the learning at-hand, anywhere they find themselves.”

— C-suite executive, small global organization

Every learning modality has upsides and downsides. Organizations should consider each modality’s particular challenges when deciding which training type is best for the content and the learning goals, as well as the operational and budget constraints of the organization.

Challenges

Organizations identified several top obstacles they encountered when using different learning modalities (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Top Learning Modality Obstacles

ILT	Lack of time (51.4%) Difficulty sourcing training talent (35.3%)
VILT	Missing skills of the learning team (30.7%) Uptake (23.3%)
eLearning	Uptake (40.4%) Difficulty measuring impact (18.5%)
Mentored learning	Lack of time (26.4%) Difficulty measuring impact (18.5%)
Video	Difficulty measuring impact (27.4%) Missing skills of the learning team (14.8%) Knowing when to deploy modality (14.8%)
Gamification	Knowing when to deploy modality (10.3%) Missing skills of the learning team (8.8%)
Mobile	Knowing when to deploy modality (9.1%) Security concerns (9.1%)
Social	Uptake (15.8%) Difficulty measuring impact (15.8%)
Blended	Lack of time (35.9%) Difficulty measuring impact (21.4%)

“The real reason VILT is a challenge is that we are all over the world and our instructors are in the U.S. We’d have to stay up all night delivering training to really meet the needs of our audience.”

—L&D professional, midsized global organization

Although measuring impact is the No. 1 challenge of video and social learning, it is a top three challenge across the board for all modalities. This isn’t surprising. The difficulty and expense of tracking learning return on investment (ROI), or even isolating the impact of learning, is well-known and experts differ on just how much knowledge transfer happens during training. Research suggests successful knowledge transfer ranges from between 10 and 62 percent. Organizations could ease their measurement challenges by incorporating measurement earlier in the development process. As we saw in Figure 1, less than half (45.9 percent) of organizations take impact measurement into account at the beginning of the development process. By establishing a baseline early, organizations can more easily measure the effects of learning.

For as much as organizations rely on in-person training, many continue to have difficulty sourcing quality instructors to deliver their training programs. More than 1 in 3 (35.3 percent) organizations report having difficulty sourcing instructors. Many organizations using VILT (16 percent) and mentored learning (10.1 percent) report this problem as well.

Many organizations feel that the best individuals to deliver training that extracts maximum knowledge transfer are their internal subject matter experts or executives. Unfortunately, these individuals may not have the time or expertise needed to develop or deliver content for the variety of modalities needed for maximum reach and impact.

These companies are finding that working with an external learning vendor in the early stages of development — to develop and deliver appropriate training solutions (whether for in-person training, technology-enabled training, or a blended approach) — allows them to ease the burdens on internal staff while still meeting the learning goals of the company.

“One challenge is not having the staff and expertise to maximize the investment and all the potential of the capabilities of measuring ROI.”

—L&D professional, small U.S. organization

In the coming year, more training will be needed for both line-level employees and L&D teams. As more companies incorporate learning modalities where adoption is a top challenge (eLearning, social), employees need to be made more aware of the existence of the training, how to access it, and their obligation to take it. Organizations developing technological modalities (VILT, gamification, mobile) will need to ensure their L&D team is well-versed in the program and understands when the training should be deployed. Train-the-trainer sessions are especially helpful for these types of modalities.

“Our most recent adoption is in developing customized eLearning programs to enhance learning of job specific skills for hands-on practice ... [The] eLearning at the end helps them validate what would have been the preferred decision options to take. This eLearning is also being leveraged as a test to validate what level of exposure the employee has pre and post training.”

—L&D professional, small U.S. organization

Conclusion

Organizations are beginning to take a more nuanced approach to training programs — using learning modalities best suited to their business needs, budget, and geographical constraints. ILT continues to be the predominant method of training for knowledge transfer, although it is increasingly being augmented by blending technological components in order to reduce the time employees need to spend in a classroom, expand the trainings’ reach, and save employees and businesses time and money. Social learning and competitive gamification is best for increasing employee engagement, although their adoption and usage remains low. New learning modalities aren’t without their challenges, but as companies better identify their needs and take a more blended approach to training, they’ll be able to maximize their learning budgets and increase the reach of learning across the enterprise.

7 Suhrheinrich, J. (2011). *Examining the effectiveness of a train-the-trainer model: Training teachers to use Pivotal Response Training.*

Survey About

Dates

March-April 2015

Demographics

423 respondents

Organizational size

Less than 1,000: 51.7%

1,000 – 5,000: 13.9%

More than 5,000: 34.5%

Geographic distribution

One U.S. location: 24.9%

Multiple U.S. locations: 30%

Multiple U.S. locations, some global locations: 13.4%

Multiple global locations: 31.8%

About

The Training Associates (TTA)

Founded in 1994, The Training Associates is the largest, most recognized provider of on-demand learning and development talent and training-related solutions. TTA's talent offerings feature over 25,000 L&D resources specializing in adult learning for all technologies, business/soft skills, and learning modalities. TTA's services include its ability to undertake and manage projects of any size or scope related to the design, development, and delivery of training. Contact TTA at TheTrainingAssociates.com.

Chief Learning Officer

Chief Learning Officer magazine focuses on solutions for enterprise productivity in the enterprise learning market. Named Best New Publication of 2002 by the American Society of Business Publication Editors, *Chief Learning Officer* features top experts in the corporate training industry writing to executives and officers about the importance, benefits and advancements of a properly trained workforce. *Chief Learning Officer* has its own family of supporting publications, including the CLOmedia.com website and the *Chief Learning Officer Executive Briefings* electronic newsletter.

Human Capital Media

The Human Capital Media (HCM) Research and Advisory Group is the research division of Human Capital Media, publisher of *Chief Learning Officer*, *Talent Management* and *Workforce* magazines. The Research and Advisory Group specializes in partnered research solutions and customizable and proprietary deliverables that integrate seamlessly with existing sales and marketing programs. Leveraging our access to senior-level decision-makers and proven HR industry expertise, we undertake market and thought leadership research in the human resources industry. Creating custom content and presenting thought leadership research are all part of the Research and Advisory Group's focus.

If you have any questions, contact Sarah Kimmel, Director, Research and Advisory Services: skimmel@humancapitalmedia.com.

Nine Learning Modalities at a Glance

The next time your organization is looking to develop a new training tool, consider the strengths and challenges of the following modalities.

Instructor-led Training (ILT) 87.6% adoption	Used for:	Knowledge transfer	“One-on-one in person training to increase engagement and follow through.” – Survey respondent
	Outcomes:	Increased learner engagement and satisfaction	
	Challenges:	Lack of time, sourcing quality instructors	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of uptake and time	
Virtual Instructor-led Training (VILT) 59.3% adoption	Used for:	Scalability	“We have increased the use of interactive webinars. We record them to reach employees anytime, anywhere.” – TM professional, large U.S. company
	Outcomes:	Reduced costs, higher completion rates	
	Challenges:	Skills of the learning team, uptake	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of time and leadership buy-in	
Self-paced eLearning 73.8% adoption	Used for:	Accessibility	“We monitored results among far-flung employees and found usage to be fairly effective and efficient.” – CEO, small U.S. company
	Outcomes:	Reduced costs, higher completion rates	
	Challenges:	Uptake, difficulty measuring impact	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of leadership buy-in, missing skills within the learning team	
Mentored Learning 46.9% adoption	Used for:	Learning transfer, learner engagement	“We employed mentoring for a group of employees to increase their velocity of knowledge and application of software demonstration skills.” – Sales professional, mid-sized global organization
	Outcomes:	Increased learner engagement and on-the-job application	
	Challenges:	Lack of time, difficulty measuring impact, sourcing quality instructors	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of time and leadership buy-in	
Video 54.8% adoption	Used for:	Accessibility	“Understanding that adult learning in today’s society requires engagement; our efforts have been to engage using video.” – L&D professional, small U.S. company
	Outcomes:	Reduced costs, increased learner engagement	
	Challenges:	Difficulty measuring impact, skills of the learning team	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of time and leadership buy-in	
Gamification 17.4% adoption	Used for:	Learner engagement	“Enhance the learning experience, provide quantitative documentation of layers of learning, and reaching a broader audience.” – HR professional, small U.S. company
	Outcomes:	Increased learner engagement and satisfaction	
	Challenges:	Skills of the learning team, knowing when to employ (or not) new modality	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of leadership buy-in, missing skills within the learning team	
Mobile 21% adoption	Used for:	Accessibility	“We will use [mobile] for multiple purposes — all topics that can easily be a self-paced learner-led session, review and pre-work. All topics that are best suited for ‘bite size’ modules.” – Survey respondent
	Outcomes:	Reduced costs, increased learner satisfaction	
	Challenges:	Security concerns, knowing when to employ (or not) new modality	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of leadership buy-in, missing skills within the learning team	
Social/Collaborative 32.1% adoption	Used for:	Learner engagement, accessibility	“Collaborative learning has been organic. Someone learns a feature and then show others on their team, etc. We are now trying to codify that approach to get even wider adoption.” – IT professional, large U.S. company
	Outcomes:	Increased learner engagement and satisfaction	
	Challenges:	Uptake, difficulty measuring impact	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of leadership buy-in, missing skills within the learning team	
Blended Approaches (Two or more learning modalities) 74.3% adoption	Used for:	Learner engagement, accessibility, cost savings	“To maximize the face-to-face time on scenario-based training versus knowledge transfer, which is done online.” – L&D professional, large company
	Outcomes:	Increased learner engagement and satisfaction	
	Challenges:	Lack of time, difficulty measuring impact	
	Haven’t adopted because:	Lack of time and leadership buy-in	