



Facilitated Social Online Learning in the Enterprise

The Third Arrow

JEN

Mike, I just met with the business transformation cross-functional team...

They have an aggressive timeline and want 8000 employees trained by the end of next year!

MIKE

Okay, we'll need to scope out the learning objectives before we can design the e-learning program.

They said they didn't want standard e-learning. They want people to share ideas, practice customer-centric behaviors, and get feedback from designated experts.

We don't have time or budget for classroom training. What are they expecting—hundreds of live webinars?

No, but there are new technologies out there that might fit the gap between online and in-person training, and we could take a look.

Let's hope you're right—if we pick some platform that falls flat, that would stall the whole initiative.

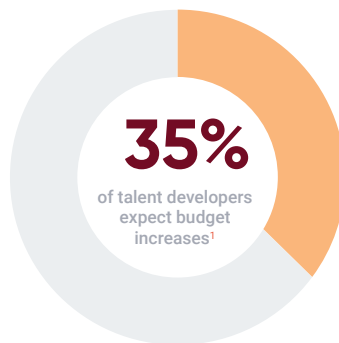
...Similar conversations are happening at large organizations everywhere.

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Introduction

The top three skills for employees to learn from L&D programs are leadership, communication, and collaboration.¹



Organizations are allocating greater resources for their talent management programs.

The Thirst for Learning in Organizations Has Never Been Greater

With today's workforce, competitive wages and challenging work are no longer enough to attract and retain top talent. Professionals are looking for organizations that will enable them to build their skills and invest in their development.

At the same time, companies are placing even more emphasis on soft skills such as communication, leadership, change management, creative problem solving, and the like. In a rapidly changing business environment, organizations are recognizing that not only are these skills a critical supplement to a strong functional and technical skill set, they are crucial to a company's success.

This evolving landscape is putting greater pressure on organizations to provide high-quality, relevant development opportunities for their employees on a wide variety of important topic areas such as communication, innovation, diversity and inclusion, business transformation, agile methods, and data and analytics.

To provide these types of learning opportunities, organizations have used a mix of in-person training for the richer content topics and e-learning for some of the more basic concepts. But there is a dilemma: in-person training is effective but is costly and logistically difficult to expand. e-Learning is very efficient to roll out but often has very low engagement and effectiveness.

This whitepaper will describe these delivery methods as "arrows" in a quiver that organizations can utilize when rolling out their training and introduce a new "third" arrow. **These arrows are:**

- **First Arrow:** In-person training, in small groups or workshops
- **Second Arrow:** Traditional e-learning, disseminated as online content
- **Third Arrow:** Facilitated online learning, as a way to provide the best of both worlds



The First Arrow: The Merits and Limits of In-Person Training

The Go-To Delivery Mode: In-Person Training & Workshops

Given the benefits of face-to-face training, your firm likely has well-honed methods for delivering in-person training.

THREE BENEFITS OF IN-PERSON TRAINING

1

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

With in-person classes, participants have the benefit of going through shared experiences and interacting with each other. Many report that building relationships and expanding their network is the most significant outcome of attending training.

2

EXPERT FACILITATION

In-person training is actively facilitated by an expert, who can guide conversations and provide immediate feedback. In a group setting, there is the added dynamic of observing feedback on others' ideas, establishing a more robust understanding.

3

PEER LEARNING

Experienced facilitators foster rich dialog among participants so that they are responding to each other. Research shows that learning from one's peers can be highly relevant, effective, and beneficial to everyone involved.

...But There Are Some Drawbacks

Getting people to the same location at the same time is expensive and a logistical challenge. Companies can't afford to have large groups of employees travel to a multi-day workshop. And employees are reluctant to take days out of their work and personal lives to attend training. Two-thirds of knowledge workers reported not having enough time to even do their jobs². Organizations that are trying to expand in-classroom training initiatives are running up against these logistical, practical, and budget limits. Given the benefits of face-to-face training, your firm likely has well-honed methods for delivering in-person training.

On average, people only have 1% of a typical work week to dedicate to training,² which is around 24 minutes a week.



IN-PERSON TRAINING

PROS

- ✓ Importance of relationships
- ✓ Facilitation by experts
- ✓ Peer-to-peer learning

CONS

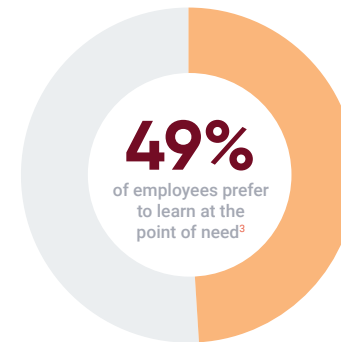
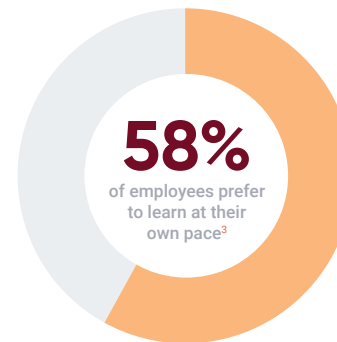
- ✓ Limited in scale
- ✓ Cost of travel & facilities
- ✓ Significant time away from work

In Addition, the World is Moving Online

It is not just the expense and time commitments that are placing limits on the amount of in-person training that can be delivered—learners have also changed. The modern learner is a more savvy user of technology, and an increasing number are looking to also learn online.

Modern learners are increasingly comfortable online, spending a great deal of time with devices and screens. When they look for information or answers to questions, they are often searching and finding answers digitally.

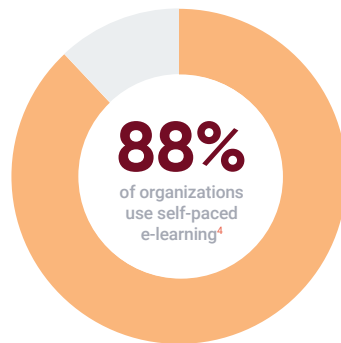
And in the workplace, the tools used for working, communicating, and collaborating are also increasingly online. Thus, it is only natural that they expect to be able to access their learning online as well.



The Second Arrow: Traditional e-Learning

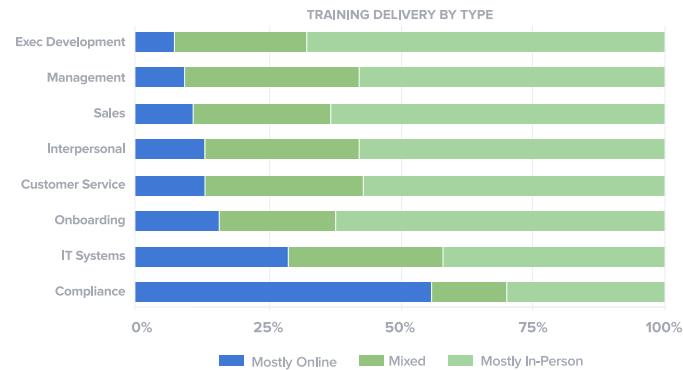
So is e-Learning The Answer?

In response to this demand for online learning, organizations hired or contracted with instructional designers experienced in creating web-based training (WBT). With sophisticated tools such as Adobe Captivate or Articulate Storyline, online training content could be created in a predictable fashion and played in a self-contained environment. This content could be run from LMS platforms. Voila! A wide array of content was available on-demand, 24x7 to employees. This removed the barriers of logistics and travel and lowered costs.



e-Learning started to look like a viable Second Arrow to provide training that would scale and meet the needs of organizations and their employees. Indeed, many observers predicted that very quickly all training would move online, and that e-learning would dominate corporate learning.

Most higher-level skill training still has yet to move online.⁵



But it didn't turn out that way. Initially, organizations focused on the low-hanging fruit: moving basic informational or compliance training online. But as the number of e-learning courses expanded, it did not replace all of the classroom training. A look at recent data shows that much of the training outside of compliance-type training remained in person or partly in-person.

Three times as many organizations say they have a substantial or critical gap in soft skills compared to their gaps in either technical or functional skills.⁶

SHORTCOMINGS OF STANDARD e-LEARNING



Passive learning experience



Absence of feedback



Lack of application/practice

It turns out that many development initiatives, such as leadership, communication, innovation, and customer service, so-called “soft skills,” require applying nuance and judgment. A classroom or workshop setting can help to bring these nuances out, through facilitated discussions among the group and peers being exposed to each others’ experiences and reactions.

Thus, although standard e-learning might be well suited for compliance training or information dissemination, this ‘Second Arrow’ isn’t going to deliver the transformation many were hoping it would.

Standard e-Learning Falls Short

Standard e-learning can help achieve scale at low cost, expanding access to large numbers of potential learners. However, the way e-learning is implemented removes most of the benefits that come with in-person training. People passively consume content and are not actively engaging with their peers and instructors. Most traditional e-learning consists of videos and quiz exercises. Although this is billed as “interactive”, it is a solo experience, with the learner “interacting” with their computer but not interacting with a group or community that is learning together.

While standard e-learning can be effective for disseminating content for the purposes of teaching facts, it is not effective in helping to develop new skills. Acquiring new skills requires learning, applying, getting feedback, observing others, and practicing. So, to the extent that we want our learners to develop new skills, standard e-learning falls short as a training approach.

“For the most part, students complete online classes alone...often, online classrooms can lack a sense of community and lead to a feeling of isolation. They also reduce the opportunity to network with others.”⁷



The Third Arrow: The Facilitated Online Learning Approach

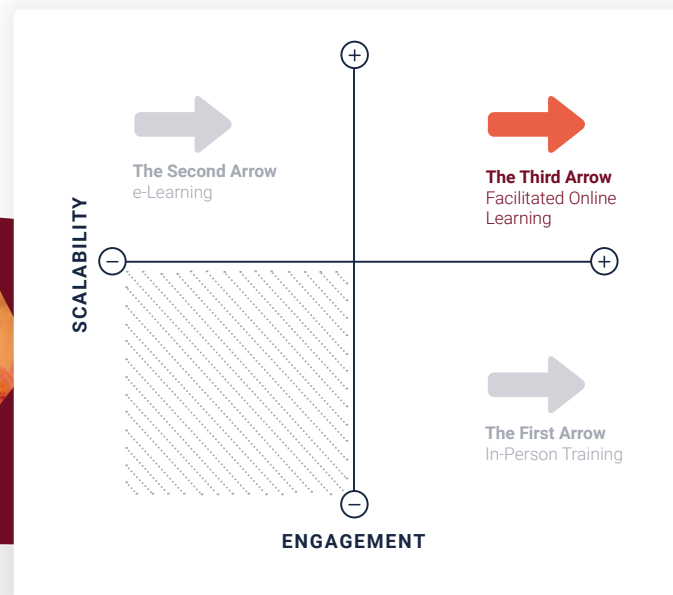
Is VILT the answer?

What about virtual instructor-led training? Although providing some scale, the logistical and motivational challenges of attending multiple long sessions at specific times still remain and are significant. Ultimately, **VILT** falls short.

So are learning and development leaders stuck with the dilemma of using face-to-face training that is costly and doesn't scale, or e-learning, which is low-cost and scalable, but provides a lackluster solo learning experience? There is a third option, the Third Arrow: facilitated online learning.

Facilitated Online Learning

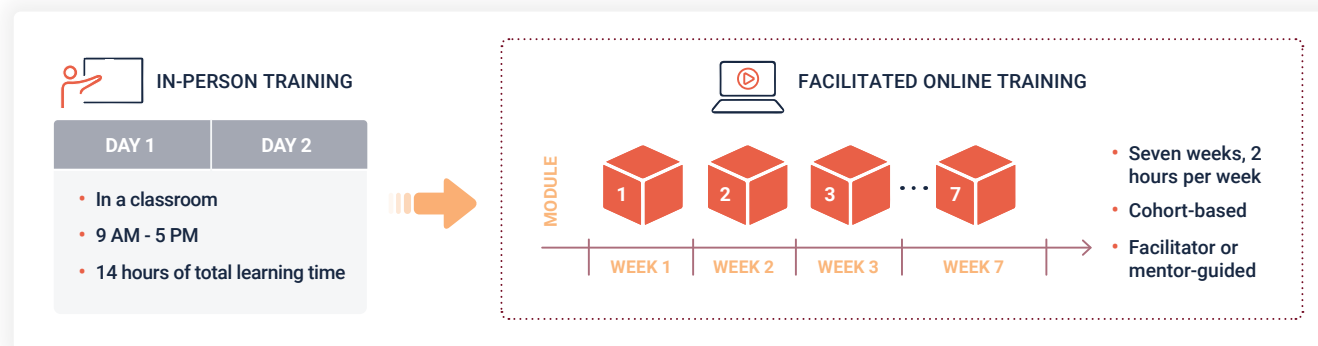
There is another possibility that can offer a richer learning experience while still providing the scale of online. Learners can go through an online learning experience together as a cohort at a set pace (Jeanne Meister refers to this as "semi-synchronous" learning⁸), interact with each other and mentors, provide feedback on applied work, and collaborate in groups. This approach brings back those social dynamics from in-person training back into the online environment.



Creating this type of online learning environment does require a capable platform and some facilitator time. But compared to in-person training, this facilitation effort can be highly leveraged. For example, an instructor who teaches one in-person session of 25 people might spend the same amount of time facilitating an online course of 250 people, answering questions, providing feedback, and encouraging the learners' progress. These courses will feel "lively", and can be scaled to hundreds and even thousands of learners across an organization, while still providing a high-quality learning experience.

Designing a Facilitated Online Learning Experience

How would a cohort-based, facilitated experience be designed? Let's take a look at how we might convert a typical instructor-led training (ILT) into online training. The first thing we can do is map the total classroom time to an equivalent time over a number of weeks. Let's say a two-day workshop lasts 7 hours per day or 14 hours in total. If this amount of learning time was spread over 7 weeks, it could be divided into 7 weekly modules, requiring just 2 hours per week. Learners could then choose when to take part in learning and would be reminded to stay on that weekly schedule.



When converting instructor-led training (ILT) into facilitated online learning, several techniques can be incorporated to improve the learning effectiveness:

- **Micro-learning Approach** – content is necessarily divided up for more effective learning
- **Reinforcement Learning** – spacing learning over time allows for review and reinforcement
- **Authentic Applications** – assignments can involve practicing in authentic contexts

Conclusion:

A Modern Approach for a Digital World

Facilitated online learning opens up new possibilities for enterprise learning initiatives. When utilizing sound instructional design on the right platform, organizations can deliver rich online learning experiences in areas such as leadership development, digital transformation, and onboarding – and scale these initiatives across a distributed workforce.

Rather than being trapped in a standard, solo e-learning experience, facilitated online learning can enable a vibrant, effective, and engaging learning experience.

When using a learning platform that offers group collaboration, cohorts, projects and assignments, and mentorship support and feedback, you can provide high-quality facilitated learning to your employees, at scale.

Now you have a “Third Arrow” in your quiver to deliver great learning online.

JEN

We just got the results from the pilot!

Out of the 50 participants, 44 completed the program. It got a high NPS score, generated lots of discussion, and resulted in several project ideas.

MIKE

Yes, I heard the buzz!
And what will it take to expand to the full rollout?

We've identified the enhancements we want to make, and we know how much facilitation to provide now...We can rollout in cohorts of 500 and have it still feel personal.



This could be your story, too.

About NovoEd

Founded at Stanford's Social Algorithms Lab in 2012, NovoEd is a capability-building platform that uses social and collaborative learning to drive alignment, performance, and mobility at scale. Through cohort-based experiences, NovoEd taps into collective wisdom, placing each learner at the center of perspective, application, and expertise. Large enterprises such as 3M, GE, and Nestlé partner with NovoEd to accelerate their critical initiatives and reconnect teams through learning that is felt, experienced and swiftly transformed into impact. Visit www.novoed.com to learn more.

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