

The Third Arrow

Facilitated Social Online Learning
for Training Firms

SUE

Well, that was a surprise!

Our client is getting serious about transformational change, but now they want to train 800 people. That's every senior leader in their organization!

In what timeframe?

RAY

By the end of the year.

Well, besides our team, we can check with our regular outside facilitators.

They aren't getting more budget for this expanded scope. They asked about online training options.

There it is again. They want mass-produced content, not real learning experiences.

To be fair, they want both. With new technologies emerging, maybe we should look at this again. If we could find something that would work, we could start saying yes to these types of opportunities.

Maybe you're right! 🙌

...Similar conversations are happening at training firms everywhere.

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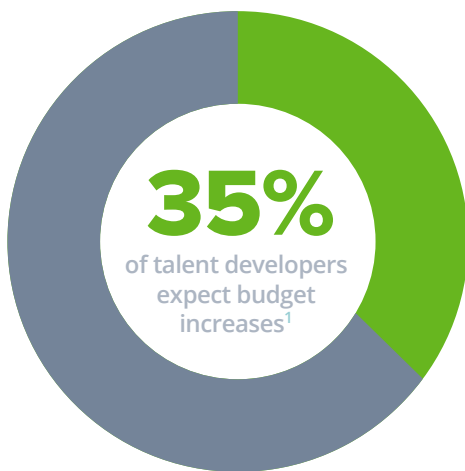
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Introduction

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. Workers are looking for organizations that will help them build their skills and invest in their development.

At the same time, rapid changes in the business environment are making skilled, adaptable employees crucial to organizations' success. There are significant needs to upskill communication, leadership, change management, creative problem-solving, and the like. Based on these factors, the demand for and need for high-quality training programs is greater than ever.

These environmental shifts present tremendous opportunity for training firms that can deliver programs that result in effective skill development and lasting behavioral change.

To deliver this type of training, firms have mostly relied on in-person training with some dabbling in e-learning, with varying success. This whitepaper will describe these delivery methods as "arrows" in their quiver that firms can utilize to train their clients, 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 standard online learning content
- **Third Arrow:** Facilitated online learning, as a way to provide the best of both worlds

¹ <https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report-2018>



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 Drawbacks

Getting people to the same location at the same time is expensive and a logistical challenge. People can't afford to take one to three days out of pocket to attend training; two-thirds of knowledge workers reported not having enough time to even do their jobs.² Organizations that are trying to expand their training programs are running up against these limits with 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.

² Bersin: Meet the Modern Learner, 2015, <http://2syt8l41furv2dqn6123ah0-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/unnamed.png>



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.



³ <https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report-2018>



The Second Arrow: Traditional e-Learning

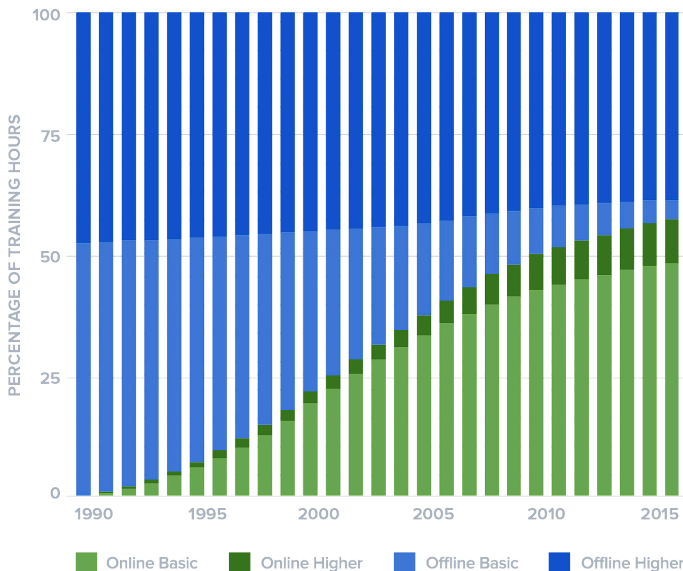
So is e-Learning The Answer?

In response to this demand for online training, organizations made an effort to make a wide array of content available to their employees, 24x7 and on-demand. This removed the barriers of logistics, travel, and lowered costs. This started to look like a viable second arrow for training firms in their quiver of training methods.

Some firms decided to join the bandwagon: they hired directors of digital programs and instructional designers and went to work translating their material into self-paced e-learning.

Corporate clients started asking consulting and training firms to distill their material into e-learning modules so that this content could be made broadly available in their organizations. Many training firms were cautious about changing delivery modes from a successful one (in-person) to an uncertain one (online).

Migration of Online Training for Basic and Higher Level Skills⁵



But there were unexpected results. It turned out that many others were riding the e-learning bandwagon, resulting in a flood of content. There were large libraries of content being assembled by the likes of SkillSoft, LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com), Udemy, and others. It became more difficult to distinguish superb content, and broad reach was accompanied by low utilization and diminished impact. In addition, training firms saw their margins on e-learning plummet as content, divorced from expert facilitation, became commoditized.

4 <https://www.td.org/insights/good-news-for-l-d-learning-spending-and-hours-are-growing>

5 Extrapolated from Bersin Corporate Learning Factbook (2015) and ATD State of the Industry (2016), smoothed for illustrative purposes



Many premier training firms are concerned about their brand equity as they consider moving online.

Now many were starting to ask: can high-quality, nuanced training be taught through traditional e-learning? The consulting and training firms that did not jump on the e-learning bandwagon were concerned about their brands, skeptical that they could convey the value-add experiences that their reputations were built on. It turned out that their suspicions were right. The 'Second Arrow' of e-learning doesn't deliver what 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.

SHORTCOMINGS OF STANDARD e-LEARNING



- Passive learning experience
- Absence of feedback
- Lack of application/practice



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.”⁶

⁶ <https://education.seattlepi.com/disadvantage-online-learning-communities-1331.html>



The Third Arrow: The Facilitated Online Learning Approach

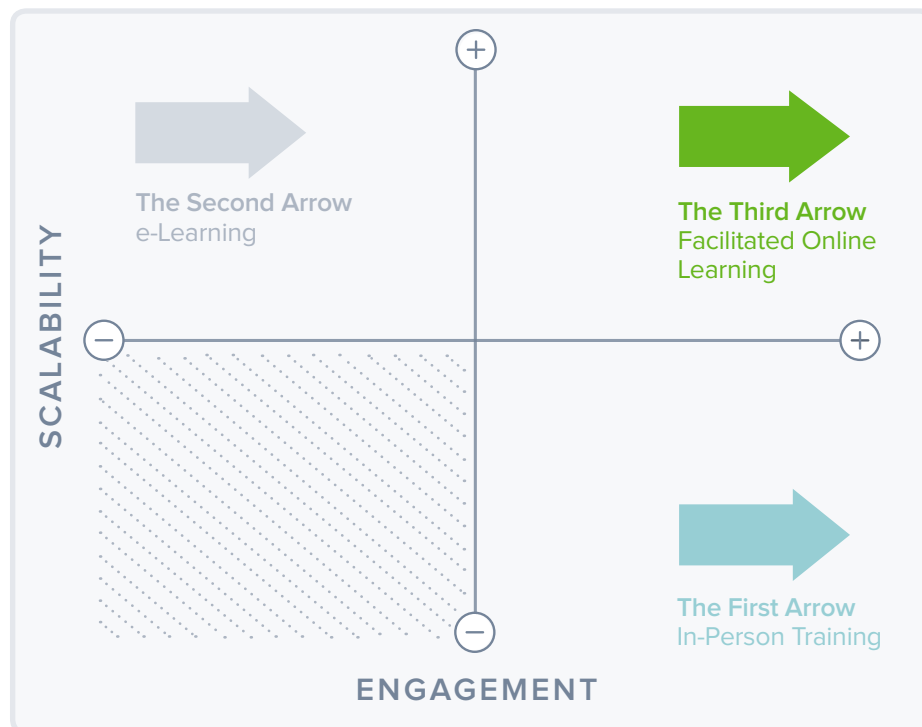
So, are trainers stuck with the dilemma of using face-to-face training that is costly and doesn't scale? Or e-learning, which is low-cost and scalable, but provides a lackluster solo learning experience? There is a third option, the Third Arrow: facilitated online learning.

Facilitated Online Learning

There is an approach 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 (Jeanne Meister refers to this as “semi-synchronous” learning⁷), 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 into the online environment.

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.



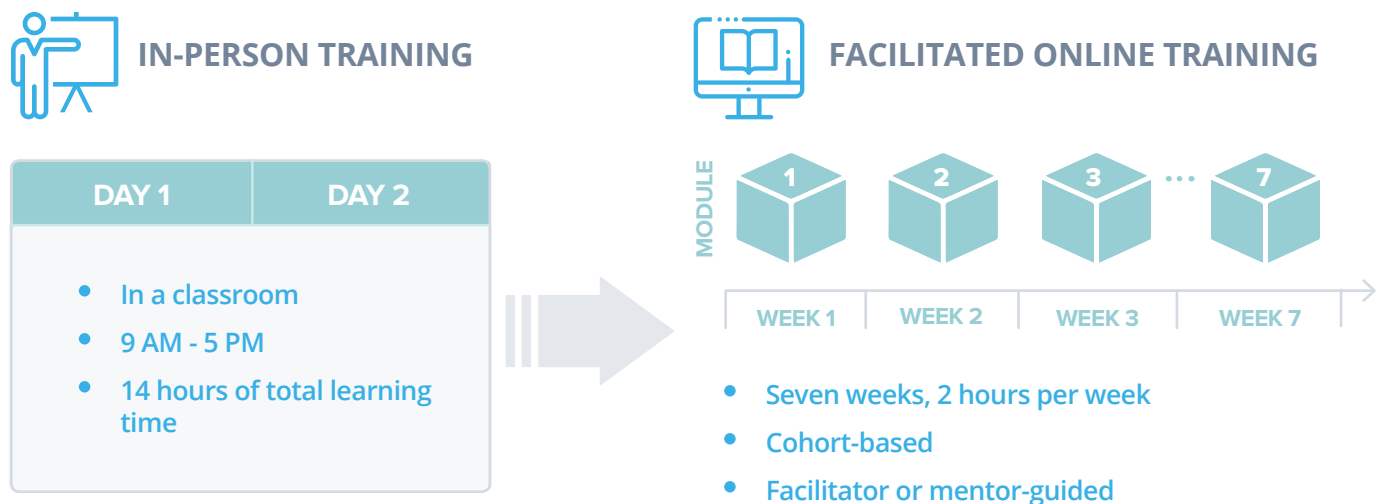
⁷ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jeannemeister/2013/08/13/how-moocs-will-revolutionize-corporate-learning-development/#31c8811e1255>



Creating a facilitated online learning environment requires a capable platform, a well-designed program, and some facilitator time. But compared to in-person training, this facilitation effort can be highly leveraged. For example, a trainer 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 of 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

With these potential benefits, you can see that instead of being a poor substitute for in-person training, facilitated online learning opens up new possibilities. Learners can use multimedia video to record their communication presentations, practice newly learned coaching techniques in their workplace, or get feedback from their co-workers on new innovation ideas.

The opportunities are endless when utilizing sound instructional design on the right platform. Rather than being trapped in a standard, solo e-learning experience, facilitated online learning can enable a vibrant, effective, and engaging learning experience. Once you start to explore the possibilities with the Third Arrow, you'll see that it can help to bring the best of in-person training online.

With a learning platform that offers group collaboration, cohort support, projects and assignments, and mentorship, you can now provide high-quality facilitated learning to your audience, at scale.

Now you have a "Third Arrow" in your quiver to deliver great content online.

SUE

We got the green light on the new project!

The online training got so many of the managers excited, and they generated several great ideas during the program that they are planning to try out.

Yes, I heard the buzz! What is the new project?

RAY

It's a rollout of the change management program for all of the employees in two divisions. We're talking about 2,000 people!



This could be your story, too.

Learn more about how you can provide high-quality online training. Contact us at info@novoed.com.



About NovoEd

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NovoEd makes it possible to scale the best of in-person training online across a global workforce. NovoEd's customers include mid-size enterprises, Fortune 500 companies, and executive education providers.



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