

## L&D's New Normal: Prepare Now!

By: Cindy Pascale

Everyone is talking and trying to guess what the “New Normal” will be for all things in life. From travel to professional sporting events, from concerts to the arts, and from school to office reentry plans.

As we look at the new normal for training and development, there are many predictions. One prediction is that companies are going to transition away from instructor-led training to e-learning and virtual training. Historically, companies have cited the following reasons for making the transition from instructor-led training:

1. Costs less. Online is generally less expensive due to less time away from work and no travel costs.
2. Consistency. Online provides a more consistent learning experience; everyone gets the same message. Instructors have different communication styles and can interpret or present materials in different ways.
3. Shorter training time. Typically, the seat time of an online program is less than half (or one-third) of an instructor-led training program. A Brandon Hall study concluded that e-learning takes 40-60% less time to complete than traditional classroom training. This means that the learner can achieve the same learning outcomes in much less time.
4. Learner centric. The e-learning approach is learner-centric and provides learners with control, enabling them to go through the training at their own pace. Plus, they have access to this training to refer to or refresh when required.
5. Flexibility. E-learning provides anytime, anywhere access to training. Additionally, it gives learners a choice to select the device on which they want to learn.
6. Learning retention. According to a study by the Research Institute of America, learning retention rate is in the range of 25-60% for e-learning, whereas it is 8-10% for face-to-face training.
7. Review. When training is offered online, the learner can “on-demand” review the training. For instance, the learner needs to do a coaching session. The learner can review the steps to a great coaching session, gather his/her thoughts by re-watching the course, and do a better job meeting with the employee.

All of the reasons just provided are augmented with three new reasons to convert from instructor-led training to online learning.

1. Learning consumption. According to several different sources, online courseware usage is up 2.5 to 3 times compared to pre-pandemic rates. People are using their furloughs or work-from-home situations to develop themselves. Learners are actively upskilling and using their employers' online libraries to upskill and educate themselves. Additionally, companies are having employees complete their required compliance training during this time.
2. Work-from-home. Analysts are forecasting that post-pandemic there will be an increase in people working from home. The prediction is that 25 – 30% of people will remain working from home.
3. Social distancing. As people return back to work, people still need to social distance. This means that in person instructor led workshops will need to have fewer people per class. Further, organizations will have to deliver more workshops to train the same number of people. This is very costly.

In addition, many L&D leaders are saying their budgets are cut, and there is a concern that in the short term, budgets may not fully bounce back. As we pointed out earlier, online training is less expensive, so this may be one of the catalysts for converting to e-learning now.

According to a Forbes article published May 2020, one author makes a very strong prediction: "Education and training that can be done online will be done online, always, from this point forward." This is a solid statement! If training can be done online, it will be. This means L&D leaders need to prepare now for online learning!

So, what do L&D leaders need to do now to prepare for L&D's new normal? There are seven things:

1. Convert your IL workshop to virtual workshop or online. This is a bigger task than merely recording your trainer as they talk through their slides. How boring?! There are many papers to read, podcasts to listen to, videos to watch, or e-learning courses to take to arm yourself with the information you need to convert your IL training to engaging, effective e-learning courses. You will want to include different modalities, videos, interactions, ways to display learning content, job-aids, infographics, and quizzes. Consider converting training into numerous short, micro-learning courses.

2. Build or buy? Determine which topics you can buy courses for and the topics where you may need to build courses. Experts advise that you buy courses for general topics such as leadership and management development, employee business skills, Microsoft training, safety, and compliance topics. Topics that are specific to the company, such as product knowledge and standard operating procedures, need to be developed internally.
3. Make sure you have the best online courses available. When choosing an off the shelf e-learning courseware provider, use this checklist:
  - Courses are less than two years old and the vendor is committed to updating the courses at least every two years
  - Mobile responsive
  - Award-winning
  - Micro-learning
  - Courses that engage the learners with videos, job-aids, interactivities, knowledge checks and quizzes
  - 508 compliant
4. Map IL training to online courses. You need to take the learning objectives of your instructor led workshops and match those to the learning objectives of your e-learning courses. This will ensure that you are in fact providing the same learning as you did with classroom training. Oftentimes, your off-the-shelf e-learning courseware vendor can map their courses to your IL workshop learning objectives for you.
5. Collaboration tools. Learners may miss the collaboration and learning from their peers' questions and comments. Minimize this loss by using the discussion forums offered on your LMS or other collaboration tools. Encourage discussions by posing questions, adding comments, and commenting on other learners' posts.
6. Skill your workers to work remotely. For those that will remain working from home, provide them the training they need to continue to be successful working from home. Ensure this training includes the organization's expectations of staying informed and staying connected to the company and team members.
7. Make sure your leaders have the skills to manage remote team members. You will want to make sure that you build your managers' capabilities to build trust, hold people accountable, build a strong team, set goals, develop and coach employees, and help team members achieve their goals all done virtually.

Prepare now for L&D's new normal.

**About Cindy Pascale:**

Cindy Pascale is the CEO and co-founder of Vado and has 16+ years of HR, Training & Development and OD leadership experience and 12 years running training, talent management, and assessment companies. She was a 2018, 2019 and 2020 LearningElite Judge for Human Capital Media and an Elearning Industry author since 2018.

Vado is an award winning off the shelf e-learning courseware provider 'changing the face of learning' by helping learners apply their training on the job. [www.vadoinc.net](http://www.vadoinc.net). Vado specializes in management and leadership development, employee business skills, sexual harassment, compliance and sales courses.