



New To Online Education?

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June 2007

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Brief History – Computer Based Training

In the late 1980s, pioneers such as Stanford University's spin-off *Computer Curriculum Corporation* (CCC) began delivering education utilizing a computer based model. CCC found computer-based training (CBT) courses that augmented standard K-12 classroom instruction accelerated the education process significantly. Typically, the delivery of CBTs was via an internal hard drive, a removable floppy disk, or an internal computer network.

In the early 1990s, the expansion of the Internet provided the world a *global network*. A forum to provide CBT, or what was renamed web-based training (WBT), through public networks. The costs associated with providing students with direct access to topic experts via WBT proved to be much less than the traditional classroom/seminar format. However, as the use of the Internet expanded, issues related to bandwidth, audio capabilities, computer size, etc. and desired delivery methodology by content authors (topic experts) emerged.



“Online education can deliver 5 times the content at 1/3 of the price when compared to instructor lead training”. *IBM*

Beginning in 2000, organizational/institutional training managers began transitioning to educational facilitators rather than content experts. Their focus shifted to identifying the best content for the organization's employee base and insuring it was delivered in a timely and professional manner. For example training managers now facilitate seminars, webinars, instructor lead courses, and online training ... whatever is the best mix of content and price for their organizations.

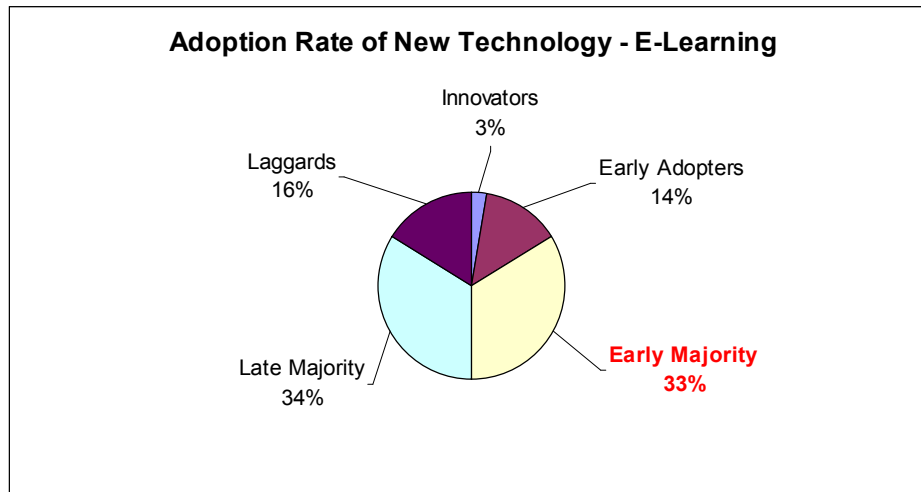
While instructor lead training (ILT) will most likely never be replaced entirely, there has been a rapid adoption of CBT and WBT as a complement to traditional training methods. Currently, South Carolina is emerging as a key player in the *Technology Triangle* in the Southeastern United States. Did this result from CBT training? Data suggests this may be one factor in the growth of technology in this quadrant of the country.



In South Carolina, computer labs were installed on local networks in a various K-12 schools. Resulting in numerous students advancing 2 grade levels when supplemental CBT courses were included in the annual curriculum.

Where Is the Adoption Rate Now?

When a technological innovation is introduced, not everyone adopts it at the same time. Rather, there will be innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.



Diffusion of Innovations – Everett M. Rogers

For a technological innovation to take-off or gain acceptance, buy-in by innovators and early adopters is essential. Today, the adoption rate of eLearning in the early majority category is growing. Based on a study by Bersin and Associates, 25% of corporate training hours delivered in 2005 were via eLearning.


What Are the Pieces of the Online Training Puzzle?

Today, after 30 years of computer based training, things can still seem a bit complicated. ELearning software and content creators have created a plethora of acronyms and terms within the industry. It can be frustrating and bit confusing trying to figure it all out. Let's discuss several pieces of the online training puzzle.


- Content or curriculum is a key element to consider. Does the material meet the organization's educational requirements? Will it advance staff personally and/or professionally? Can the content be trusted? Will it be updated? These are questions to ask as content is evaluated. Authors can range from experts to impersonators. Buyers beware, in the area of course content and its source.
- Instructional presentation, cartoons are for kids. In business, the audience is the adult-learner not the K-12 crowd. Alligators that jump up and say "good job" are annoying and insulting. The level of the training needs to be targeted for the adult-learner:
 - Content presented in a meaningful sequence and in association rather than isolation.
 - Moderate amounts of anxiety and challenge in tandem with feedback and reinforcement.
 - Active participation through mental activity, including practice and repetition.
 - Opportunity to apply learning concepts immediately in everyday work.

Informative material, self-check, post tests and browsing external sites stimulate the adult learning process.

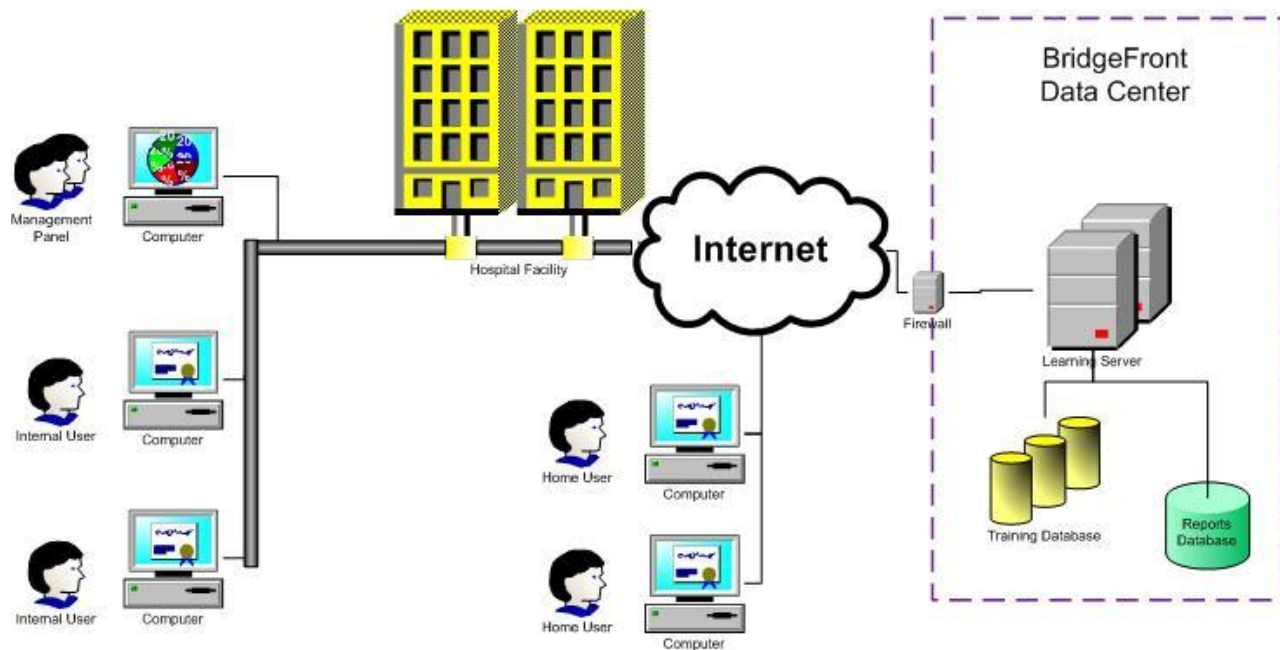
- Technology for the sake of technology is not good. Not everyone has a high-end computer and unlimited band-width available at his/her desk, thus the use of video, audio, flash, and other technology widgets may not be the best solution. Some WBT companies state privately, “our training is for selling, not for using,” meaning it looks slick, but does not really train anyone. However, in specific learning situations integrating technology in an online course can have a targeted impact. For example, including audio heart sounds in a heart murmur course is an effective use of audio-technology.

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|  | <p>While including audio “sounds good” to the buyer, contrary to early beliefs it does not increase retention rate among learners. <i>Computer Curriculum Corporation</i></p> |
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- A Learning Management System (LMS) enables the organization to manage the educational process. The LMS is the ‘Course Library’ for the organization. A comprehensive LMS includes features such as employee tracking of access, progress, and test scores. In addition, it should include administrative features such as new course assignment, real-time monitoring, and report creation. LMS systems are available for local installation, or they can be accessed through the internet in what is termed an Application Service Provider (ASP) model.

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|  | <p>Nearly 70% of large organizations have deployed some type of eLearning program today, and more than 60% have a Learning Management System (LMS). <i>Bersin & Associates</i></p> |
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- Remote content providers can deliver courses directly to the organization. Third party content provider courses do not need to be housed on an organization’s LMS. Courses hosted on a third party’s platform can be accessed through a customized interface, enabling an organization to maintain its own LMS and still have access to a wide-array of learning content.



Where Do I Start?

As an organization considers eLearning, there are several high-level steps that may need to be completed.

Define the training needs of the organization.

First, survey the managers within the organization. These individuals are on the front-line and are intimately aware of staff training needs. Initiate an assessment of current training to identify areas where there is a training deficit. Is there a particular area within the organization that is having problems? Can improvements be made in a specific area that will result in the significant positive financial impact? The result of this step is a training needs assessment document.

Compare the current training tools and programs to the results of the training needs assessment. Do you have existing tools and programs in place that support the identified needs? Are they satisfactory? Isolate the areas of opportunity for online education by completing a gap analysis which identifies variances between the current and the desired state. Focus attention on the areas that will result in the highest return on investment (ROI).

Identifying and targeting areas and individuals that may yield a high ROI can assist in gaining administrative buy-in to invest the time and money needed to implement an eLearning solution.

Identify how to best deliver the training.

Typically, an organization offers a blended learning approach, incorporating a variety of training delivery methods, such as classroom, video media, seminar, webinar, written documentation, and online instruction, to name a few. This document is focused on delivering training via an online model.

Administration of the eLearning program - Installed LMS Model vs. ASP Model

Installed LMS Model - There are a number of LMS software solutions available on the market today. This solution requires a capital purchase decision by the organization, and it may require not only purchase of the LMS software, but additional hardware to support the infrastructure. This model is typically reserved for larger organizations, as the up-front investment can be significant and maintenance costs and resources considerable.

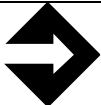
ASP Model – Again, there are a number of ASP vendors available today. Generally an organization signs a license agreement with the ASP vendor, enabling access via the internet to the LMS courseware, software, and hardware. The up-front costs for this solution are typically lower than an installed LMS. However, research and due diligence is required when selecting an ASP vendor for a long-term solution.

Integrating current training records into the LMS

Training records can be exported from the current human resource/training tracking system and imported into the LMS. In addition, test scores can be imported from the LMS and imported into the organization's credentialing system. Both of these interfaces or data integration steps are relatively simple. However, beware as sophistication and data complexity adds expense. Real-time interfaces or data manipulation interfaces can become both expensive and time intensive to create and install.

Gaining executive, management, and staff level buy-in

Delivering a value-add online training proposal to the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) should be a straight forward matter. A CFO understands the need to invest for return. Online training can dramatically reduce the cost to deliver house-wide and job specific training, by reducing and/or eliminating costs associated with travel, instructor costs, room rentals, meals, etc. In addition, online training is available to all staff 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

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|  | <p>Online training can save organizations' hundreds of thousands of dollars in training costs annually – see BridgeFront ROI Calculator: http://www.bridgefront.com/resources_roi.php</p> |
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Obtaining buy-in and understanding by management requires a different value-add proposition. Managers need to be shown how easy it is to monitor employee training, access test results for performance reviews, and identify knowledge deficiencies. The increased time savings and staff performance resulting from offering online learning is a win for the management.

And finally, ensuring employee buy-in to online learning is generally based on the individual's perceived benefits. Online training empowers an employee through self-directed learning, as courses can be taken based on his/her personal schedule. Online training incorporates alternative learning experiences which can excite and motivate employees. For some, the online training experience will stimulate additional learning on other job related subjects. CEUs

and certificates may be available for qualifying courses, supporting professional growth and advancement.

Next Steps – Action Plan

- ☑ Create a curriculum map for each job description, linking online course offerings to specific performance and skill requirements. This is a key implementation step, as these maps are important staff development and retention tools.
- ☑ Build employee acceptance of the value of online training, by promoting the ease of use, scheduling flexibility, up-to-date education, etc. Implement an internal communication and awareness plan prior to implement, focusing on how employees will personally benefit from accessing and using the online courseware.
- ☑ Populate the LMS database with each user/student's demographic information. During this step a unique user identification key is created for each student, enabling each student to access his/her assigned online courses. This can be done quickly via an employee record export from a human resources or other employee database, creating a unique user name/password combination, and importing the employee demographic and identification key into the LMS.

Each student will be assigned a unique identification key enable him/her access to the online courses. In addition, the student's progress is recorded in the LMS and available for monitoring and reporting purposes.

Who Can Help You Get Started?

A learning service consultant can offer assistance in deploying eLearning within an organization. Services include creating an eLearning roll-out plan, identifying staff education needs, developing learning plans, educating managers on administrative and monitoring processes, and being a resource for the mired of 'getting started' questions.

Conclusion

Employers today are seeking ways to increase productivity. Studies indicate staff training is one of the most effective ways to positively impact productivity. However, training has often been over looked or avoided due to the time and resources required to deliver consistent, quality educational activities.

Online education is shifting this paradigm. The use of eLearning in the workplace is moving rapidly from the early adaptor stage to mainstream. Employees are not only embracing it as a time saver, but learning more from this new self-paced medium. As 'technology savvy' employees become more common in the work force, there will be an increased demand for rapid, electronic learning mediums.



Why Wait – Implement eLearning today and open up the world of online learning to your staff and experience the benefits of:

- Increased productivity
- Improved quality
- Positive financial outcomes

Today, organizations can positively impact productivity, quality, and financial outcomes by tap into state of the art eLearning solutions via either an internal or outsource solution.

Simply put, why wait?