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Training Trends: Past and future

Learning and development remains vitally important for every organisation but has changed radically over the last 20 years, especially recently. The impact of the pandemic on ways of working has forced everyone to rethink their training strategy. So, what fundamental attributes of training remain the same as they always were and what can we expect in the future?

THE STATUS QUO

The benefits of investing in the development of your employees are still the same: improved performance, job satisfaction and morale, reduced turnover and enhanced business reputation. In high hazard industries, this translates into fewer incidents.

Despite huge advances in technology, the qualities of an effective learning experience remain unchanged. Successful training will be practical and of use to the participants in their day-to-day jobs, relevant to their industry and based on real-life case studies. When participants can see

the immediate benefits, their engagement increases. And the enthusiastic and knowledgeable trainer will always create a livelier learning experience than the boring academic.

Unfortunately, some limiting beliefs still persist amongst trainers; most

OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

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**SAME PLANE,
DIFFERENT INSTRUCTIONS
- WHO CAN BUILD THEIR
FASTEST?**

Are your instructions **first-class**, do they leave you to *wing-it*, or should they be ditched completely?

For Grown-Ups: This game illustrates the importance of clear, accurate, intuitive and easy to follow operating instructions to achieve a successful and safe outcome. It prompts players to challenge whether the operating instructions and procedures they use in their jobs are as good as they could be.

Game Based Learning

Figure 1 – Plane Simple game

notably the idea that watching slides pass by is the best way to learn something. The conviction that learning the theory outweighs 'having a go' is still out there. And there remains a belief that only classroom-based learning is 'correct'.

WHAT'S CHANGED?

Happily, the effectiveness of training delivery and the resulting positive impact on organisations has improved. The concept of accelerated learning or 'learn by doing' has gained more traction. Many of us are familiar with Edgar Dale's pyramid, commonly referred to as the 'Cone of Learning', where he suggested that we retain only 10% of what we read and as much as 90% of what we do. He did warn us not to take these figures too literally, but as most people know from common experience, the underlying principle is sound.

Consistently, feedback from Risktec's own clients shows that most learning (and enjoyment) on a training course comes from the activities within it. Cast your mind back to your last training event; do you remember the slides or the activities?

Organisations are now recognising the need for awareness training across all job roles, not just risk and safety specialists, to ensure an effective organisational safety culture. This shift, combined with innovative thinking, has seen game-based learning become increasingly popular. Developed and tested over a number of years, Risktec has amassed a series of games which are designed to instil a fundamental understanding of key technical safety themes at all levels of an organisation. The games link the themes to everyday analogies, making the learning memorable, fun and hands-on. Figure 1 shows the Plane Simple game, which prompts players to challenge the quality of the operating procedures they use in their jobs.

IMPACT OF COVID

The pandemic has undoubtedly accelerated the move to online learning; many employees are now familiar with the likes of Zoom and

MS Teams for receiving training. Even when staff return to the office, the pandemic has thrust us years into the future; companies have realised that allowing employees to work from anywhere is feasible and practical, and training will match this trend.

This 'revolution' has brought into focus the need for better quality delivery, particularly more deliberate teacher interaction. In a classroom, trainers rely on reading body language; in the online world they need to prompt more frequently with probing questions. More teacher dynamism and creativity is required to sustain motivation levels, making use of participative exercises, breakout rooms, interactive whiteboards, polls and shared files. But it's not all about the trainer though; participants have to be more vocal when they want to interact, no longer being able to rely on a quizzically-raised eyebrow or a frown.

Many of our clients have accepted that live, online learning can work well. Some are still going through that process, but our experience of delivering online training can help. For example, we recognise that online training is more intense and concentration levels can drop, so we recommend that sessions are limited to two hours at a time, with breaks, and two sessions per day.

A GLANCE INTO THE FUTURE

What will the next 20 years bring? We expect the term 'blended learning' will be one you will hear more and more as training and development becomes a combination of online learning and classroom training. Blended learning is tailorable to an organisation's culture, geography, training budget and training needs of the participants. Blended learning offers variety in methods of instruction (lecture, discussion, games), delivery (live or recorded virtual classrooms, computer-driven lessons), guidance levels (individual, facilitator-led, group learning) and scheduling.

Another trend is the need to invest in technology with immediate payback and a strong return on investment.

Whilst developments in virtual and augmented reality in the metaverse will be exciting, we envisage many sticking to basics – less of a focus on the 'shiny and new' and more of a focus on the 'core', such as the learning management system (LMS) platform.

Expect also to see a growing demand for personalised online learning. Online training makes it easier to create micro-learning units that can be put together to create bespoke learning. So, instead of a one-size-fits-all training programme, we can look forward to customised, personalised and streamlined training packages for each individual.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has forced many organisations to adapt like never before. As more people are choosing to work remotely and requesting increased flexibility, this really is the best time to modernise your corporate training strategy.

Learning and development approaches are evolving faster than ever, aided by the rapid changes in available technology. The one-size-fits all mentality for training is outdated and companies need to capitalise on new training trends to improve learning, while freeing up valuable time and money. Recently, the renowned management consultancy firm McKinsey & Company commented: *"Now is the time for companies to double down on their learning budgets and commit to reskilling. Developing this muscle will also strengthen companies for future disruptions."*