How to Revitalize Your Employee Training Program to Improve Your ROI

hsi

MAXIMIZING ROI OF TRAINING
Executive Summary

- Traditional training programs often fail to keep employees engaged and have poor retention rates, leading to an unsavory ROI. The modern workplace needs forward-thinking training solutions to make training programs more effective. Leaders also need to understand the costs involved in not having a well-rounded training program that includes a wide range of topics.

- There are several tactics that can lead to poor training outcomes, like information overload or lack of personal advancement integration.

- We have identified multiple methods that have led to positive outcomes, particularly those involving ongoing microlearning that incorporate employee goals with company initiatives.

Most companies have some sort of training program in place. But you can instantly tell **which companies really do training right**. They're **the companies who have stellar customer service, sport a spotless safety record, and nurture and grow their talent year after year**. It only makes sense that they have high engagement and employee retention rates.

So, **what do they do differently?** And how can you get in on the "secret sauce" so your training shifts from being a cost center to an investment with a steady return?

What makes a training solution less effective than others?

Understanding what makes great training programs great requires understanding what makes training programs fail to keep employees engaged and excited to learn. Part of maximizing effectiveness is analyzing past training solutions and determining what has not worked out. According to Statista, companies across the United States increased their training expenditure by $200 million in 2023 compared to 2022. This training investment has almost doubled since 2012. With all this increased spending, we want to ensure the training is as effective as possible to maximize ROI.

Seemingly, quite a lot of training programs are ineffective: **43% of trainees claim that their workplace training was somewhat/not very/not at all effective in helping them** be successful on the job.

— IPSOS survey

Research has found four factors that have the biggest negative impact on training solutions:

1 ## Focusing exclusively on providing mandatory training, and nothing more

Many surveys assess mandatory training and agree that most mandatory training fails to meet the needs of employees. For example, a survey of VA employees found a variety of criticisms toward mandatory training. Employees felt that the mandatory training takes up too much time, isn't optimally accessible, varies in quality, and doesn't apply to an employee's role or their existing knowledge on the subject.

Traditional mandatory training is problematic on several levels. First, it uses a one-size-fits-all approach. Employees across an organization have different interests, learning styles, and backgrounds, and many will feel disengaged or may not pay attention at all during traditional mandatory training. Topics like anti-harassment or workplace ethics may feel boring to some people. When training consists only of HR compliance topics and doesn't include training that may help an employee advance their career, employees think of training as boring and a waste of their time.

Secondly, some mandatory training may come off as condescending or patronizing. This may make employees feel like their intelligence is being insulted or that they aren't being taken seriously.

Mandatory training can also be shallow. For it to be deemed appropriate for company or department-wide use and to be brief, a lot of complex details may be left out.

When employees are **exposed only to mandatory training,** there's bound to be resistance, leading to an **overall ineffective program.**

There's also the problem of mandatory training's bad rap. Even when the training courses are well done and can be effective, some employees may go into the situation with low expectations and may not be fully engaged.

2 Using "one-off" trainings that are easily forgotten

Someone's career doesn't stop after one day at work—and their training shouldn't either.

"One-off" training programs are likely to be forgotten quickly. In fact, research shows that about 75% of information is forgotten after 6 days on average, according to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve. However, if new information is applied or built upon in a meaningful way, it is more likely to be retained. For example, if the learner is introduced to some information and then a week later, they're required to retrieve it from memory, they'll be more likely to remember it the next time it is needed. When the learner continues to retrieve the information over and over at spaced intervals and use it to build their knowledge of the topic, they begin to secure it to memory.

Even on a personal level, if the employee knows they're not going to directly apply the information soon after learning it, it's easier for them to mentally check out during the training. On the other hand, if the course is a part of a bigger initiative, there's more motivation to pay attention. Regularly integrating learning into work can help combat the idea that training is a disruption.

When employees are retaining little or no information from their training programs, the training is essentially a waste of time and money.

3 Failing to link the content to something the employee cares about, like their career success and advancement

Sincere interest in training opportunities in the workplace is essential to an effective training program. Lack of interest leads to indifference and even resentment due to time away from important projects. The key to mitigating this problem is to find out why employees don't find some types of training worth their time. To do this, it's important to understand the employee's goals and how to link their goals to their training.

Maximizing ROI and helping employees prepare for a bigger role go hand in
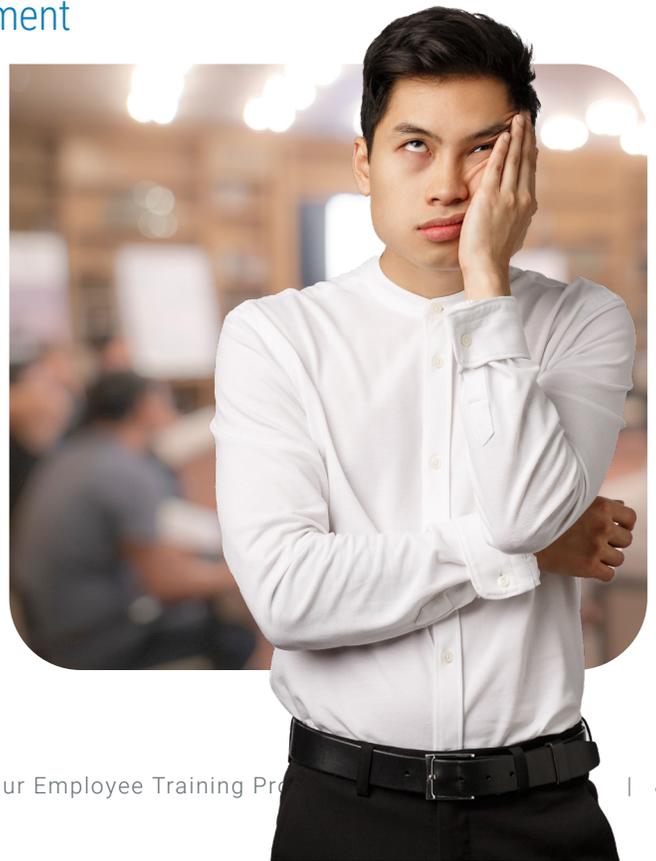
hand when it comes to training solutions. Even the C-suite started somewhere lower in the organizational chart and worked their way up. Thus, it's not hard to imagine why most employees would prefer training that helps them reach their career goals. In fact, one LinkedIn survey showed that 94% of employees would stay at companies longer if they invested in their learning and career development, and 54% said they would spend more time learning if they had courses that helped them reach their career goals.

4 Information overload with little to no organization or curation

Many of us have experienced the information overload associated with starting a new position. It generally comes with links to computer resource files. How effective is this method? How much of this information is retained? *How many times are those files even opened?*

The answers are usually: Not very, not much, and never. Instead, the new hire ends up feeling overwhelmed and scrambling to get through it all, making the overall experience ineffective for everyone.

> With an effective onboarding process, approximately 69% of employees are likely to stay at least 3 years

Of course, this doesn't mean that an employee can't juggle the information. It just means that it needs to be doled out in a more digestible way. A successful company knows this and is able to manage proper curation and organization of their training materials, which leads to happier and more successful employees. This is exemplified in one SHRM survey, which shows that with an effective onboarding process, approximately 69% of employees are likely to stay with the company for at least 3 years.

Getting to ROI:
How do the superstars implement training so effectively?

It's easy to throw together a bunch of information and say "learn this." But to get an ROI in your organization's training, you must be strategic. Luckily, there's a variety of tools and methods to achieve a more effective strategy.

1 ### Use ongoing learning tools to keep employees in a growth mindset and build knowledge over time

Adding variety to the types of training available can help keep employees engaged and avoid learning fatigue. Ongoing learning tools, like HSI's Learning Pathways, help to build up an employee's skills over time, achieve their goals without information overload, and retain the information they learn. The pathways are designed to be easily navigated but still allow for customization so the content fits well with an employee's goals and learning style.

Ongoing learning is also useful for keeping up with the constantly changing technologies and workplace dynamics. Employees don't want to feel left behind because they received their training after changes took place. With the integration of AI and frequent software updates, some employees might need to update their tech skills, but soft skills change with time too. For example, diversity, equity and inclusion training 10 years ago was a bit different than it is today. Because much of this type of training occurs during onboarding, long-term employees could benefit from refresher training. Keeping all employees current helps everyone stay on the path to a successful future. When training solutions are ongoing, everyone is on the same playing field.

This continuous investment in upskill training can also help them feel appreciated and instill a sense of belonging. According to a 2022 SHRM report, more than three-quarters of surveyed employees said they are more likely to stay with a company that provides ongoing training. Employees that are happy with their job lead to higher ROI and provide companies with dedicated future leaders.

> More than three-quarters of surveyed employees said they are **more likely to stay with a company that provides ongoing training.**

2   Use a course library with rich, diverse, and relevant topics to help employees branch out and upskill in innovative ways

When it comes to job skills, thinking outside of the box is a great way to get the most out of training solutions. This means going above and beyond the typical skills needed to simply complete the job. For example, everyone knows a software engineer needs to be logical and have great coding skills, but what about their soft skills? Many tech-oriented employees can still benefit from training on topics like creativity, communication, and time management.

Providing employees with the opportunities to learn a variety of different kinds of skills also provides a richer and more diverse workforce. Creating more well-rounded employees through training on diverse topics can lead to better workplace dynamics, more open communication, and overall better productivity. This also works in the employee's favor because employees who trained on new skills regularly ended up getting promoted 11% faster, according to LinkedIn data.

> **Employees who trained on new skills regularly ended up getting promoted 11% faster.**

3   Use carefully curated content to make course options easier to navigate

Careful curation of learning materials is important to effectively keep employees engaged in training. Even with an abundance of diverse and relevant learning materials that may help an employee gain the exact experience they want, there can be issues with the presentation. Without proper curation, they can feel overwhelmed by the effort it takes to navigate the options and uncertain where to start or what path to take. This can also eat up their valuable time.

Harvard Business Review points out that less is more when it comes to training content. People do want choices, *but only up to a certain degree*. Organizing the materials in a way that clearly shows the learner what path to take to gain a certain skill or knowledge can help mitigate the feeling of drowning in a sea of content.

4 ## Give employees some autonomy with self-directed learning

74% of employees want to learn during their spare time

Learning styles will inevitably vary among different employees, and as discussed earlier, one size does not fit all when it comes to training. One way to solve this problem is to let employees decide for themselves how to consume their learning materials. Self-directed learning allows employees to create their own goals and execute them in a way that works for them.

This type of learning also allows employees to access learning materials when they really need them, instead of having to wait for a formal training session to occur. Giving employees access to training relevant to their current projects can result in better work overall and better knowledge retention. On the other hand, if an employee is too busy with a certain project, they can save their training for another time without missing out on it due to scheduling conflicts.

Another benefit of self-directed learning is that it can be done during downtime at work, and according to LinkedIn's survey data, 74% of employees want to learn during their spare time. Using time to learn can also open the floor for ambitious employees to achieve their goals sooner.

Giving employees the opportunity to learn the way they want to and without rushing them to get training done during busy times helps to create a more effective learning environment. A more effective learning environment creates a true learning culture and leads to a higher ROI.

5 ## Fit ongoing training into everyone's schedule with microlearning

Microlearning opportunities provide the perfect solution for employees who have that bit of extra time here and there. When curated in the right way, ongoing microlearning also helps to minimize many of the problems that lead to ineffective learning. Research has shown that this type of learning helps employees retain more information by combatting the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve and keeps them engaged by using different forms of media and more manageable-sized lessons.

Companies implementing microlearning opportunities are not only helping employees learn more effectively, but also save money on training.
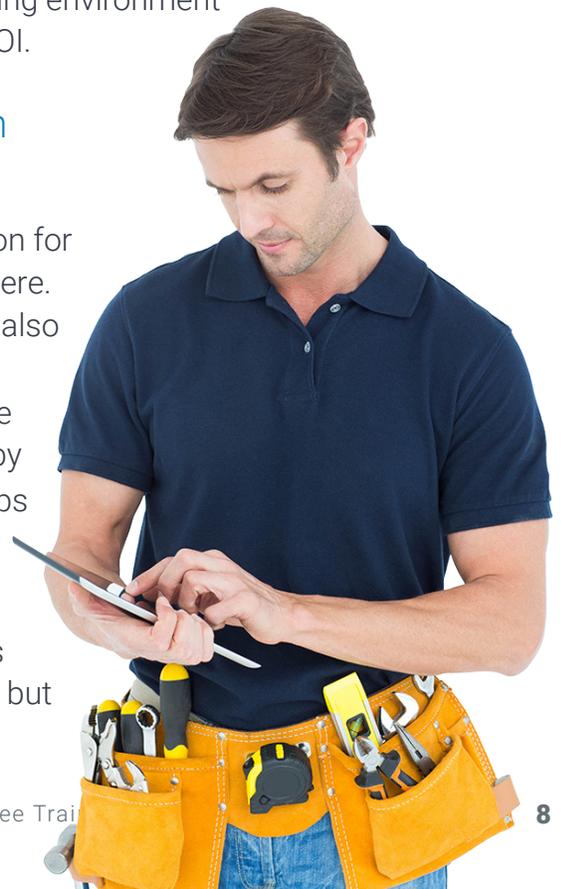
HSI Blue Ocean Brain success stories:
How these companies transformed their employee training experience
HSI Blue Ocean Brain has worked with many companies who wanted to change their training methods. These success stories show how your company can become a superstar by implementing effective ongoing training solutions with lasting results.

Success Story: **WakeMed Health**

WakeMed Health is a North Carolina healthcare provider with multiple hospitals and facilities. As in most healthcare settings, its employees were stretched thin and could find little time for anything outside of patient care. To ensure they were providing best-in-class care to their patients, leaders at WakeMed Health wanted to provide their employees with opportunities for learning and development. They came to HSI Blue Ocean Brain to find a solution for providing accessible training for both clinical and non-clinical employees in their fast-paced environment. They wanted their employees to have access to training content relevant to medical facilities and the surrounding community, such as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), mental well-being, and resilience.

HSI Blue Ocean Brain introduced WakeMed to our **soft skills microlearning courses** for easy-to-access lessons for their busy workforce, **leadership development training**, and **DEI training** to improve client organizational culture and skills gaps. These training solutions provide ongoing education and development for WakeMed's employees that help to foster an inclusive, compassionate, and focused workforce with strong leaders, all while fitting into their chaotic schedules.

After implementing these training solutions, WakeMed Health finds success in their ongoing staff development. Their employees have accessed **over 6,000 lessons**, played **more than 12,500 educational games**, and had an **overall engagement of 86%** of their workforce, despite their hectic schedules. By providing ongoing learning tools and incorporating the kind of easy-to-access microlearning mentioned above with a rich library of DEI content, they **achieved continual employee development**.

WakeMed Health keeps their employees in a learning mindset by linking content to employee success and development.

Success Story: Atlantic Health System

Atlantic Health System is one of the largest non-profit healthcare networks in New Jersey, with over 18,000 employees working in their six medical centers, 400 urgent care centers, and other facilities. The leaders at Atlantic Health created a DEI office and identified the need for an education program to implement their DEI initiatives. They knew they needed help finding the right kind of training solution for their employees. With a diverse range of employee schedules and positions, they found that traditional classroom learning would not be possible for their workforce. They also determined that their employees needed resources to maintain their growth and development and support for their own well-being and mental health during challenging times.

To meet the needs of Atlantic Health's DEI initiatives and ensure their employees had access to a diverse library of relevant resources, HSI Blue Ocean Brain collaborated with their team to **develop a learning program with a complete custom user experience** to serve as its dedicated, **enterprise-wide education hub**. This hub provided a rich library of ongoing, **bite-sized DEI lessons** for employees across departments to work on at their convenience. Topics were designed for a healthcare audience and curated to be engaging and inspirational, without overwhelming the learner.

This new training solution exceeded expectations for both HSI Blue Ocean Brain and Atlantic Health. In less than a year, **over 48,000 lessons** and **41,000 brain exercises** were accessed by employees. Leaders also reported **increases in DEI conversations** and comfort levels in doing so. Even internal mobility of employees with diverse backgrounds improved from these new DEI training solutions. In addition to these impressive results, both Atlantic Health System and HSI Blue Ocean Brain **won Silver in the Brandon Hall HCM Excellence Awards** for their exceptional Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program.

<p style="text-align:center; color:#2e75b6">Atlantic Health found success by giving their employees autonomy to choose their own self-directed learning experience and set their own goals in their own time.</p>

With the help of carefully curated microlearning that fits easily into employees' schedules, the learners retained information and put it into practice. Their learning hub provided a rich and broad-based content library to keep employees engaged in an ongoing learning experience.
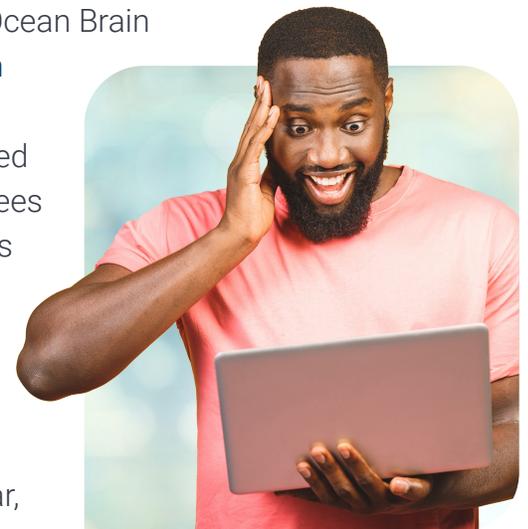
Success Story: **Dayforce**

Dayforce is a leading human resources technology company on a mission to cultivate an inclusive workplace that encourages equity, employee wellness, and professional growth for their 8,500+ employees. They realize DEI practices attract top talent and contribute to better business performance, and thus have created a dedicated school of DEI as a part of their training program.

Dayforce teamed up with HSI Blue Ocean Brain to find the most effective way to put their **DEI initiatives** into action and to find ways to **support employee wellness through education**. Together, they curated a rich library of **DEI lessons** and **educational webcasts** for Dayforce employees. Dayforce has now fully implemented their ongoing employee education program.

Since launching their DEI education program, Dayforce has had a **70% employee engagement rate**. After accessing **32,000 lessons**, **91,000 articles**, and **57,000 brain exercises**, their teams report that the short lessons and platform are easy to use and help them stay on track with their company's DEI initiatives.

Dayforce used ongoing microlearning tools to achieve their goals.
They created a rich library consisting of different types of
DEI learning and topics that accelerated the professional growth
of their employees to keep them interested.

Success Story: **Ciena**

Ciena, a telecommunications networking equipment and software company, created a new commitment to their workforce called the People Promise. This promise was meant to empower their people to feel included and create a culture of happiness, vibrance, and belonging. The People Promise was developed as part of their commitment to diversity and inclusion, well-being, community engagement, and corporate responsibility. They needed the right tools to put these ideas into motion.

Ciena wished to upskill their employees with bite-sized, high-impact content that fit into their workflow. They wanted to provide content in an engaging way in which employees "bump into" and easily interact with learning topics that represent who they are as a company. It was also crucial for them to ensure that their people were able to grow personally and within their careers.

To achieve these goals, HSI Blue Ocean Brain worked with Ciena to develop **"Branch Out," a modernized learning hub** with high-impact, relevant content, built to be easily digestible, while also offering actionable takeaways. Branch Out was designed to be easy to use and enabled users to access Ciena's other learning resources. To increase accessibility and encourage engagement, HSI Blue Ocean Brain **developed a single sign-on, weekly email nudges**, **integration with Ciena's Slack channels, an entry point for Ciena's SharePoint intranet**, and even a **mobile app**.

Branch Out proved to be a success with Ciena's workforce. **83% of Ciena's employees engaged with the platform**, accessing **62,000 articles** and **86,000 brain exercises**. This type of learning helps improve their ability to learn new topics and improve their knowledge based on topics that are important for employees' day-by-day work environment. Ciena has since continued to develop ongoing learning content with HSI Blue Ocean Brain to add to their rich content-based library.

Like the other superstar companies in this list, Ciena used ongoing microlearning to foster an environment of constant growth and learning.

<div align="center">

Ciena's Branch Out learning hub exemplified the idea of a rich library of carefully curated content that was easy for employees to integrate into their workflow.

</div>

They also created a healthy environment for employees to focus on their own professional growth, ensuring that they felt valued within the company.

Finding the right training solutions for your unique needs

At HSI, we know that different companies have different training needs. We have taken the task of finding the most effective training solutions available. We use proven methods and cutting-edge training tools to provide ongoing, relevant microlearning that employees appreciate for our customers' unique situations.

Contact us today if you're ready to transform your workforce for the better.

About HSI

HSI is your single-source partner for EHS, Compliance, and Professional Development solutions. HSI provides integrated e-learning content, training solutions, and cloud-based software designed to enable your business to improve safety, operations, and employee development. Across all industries, HSI helps safety managers, and technical employees, human resources, first responders, and operational leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe, and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements. HSI's focus is on training, software, and services for safety and compliance, workforce development, industrial skills, and emergency care. HSI is a unique partner that offers a suite of cloud-based software solutions including learning management, safety management, chemical SDS management, and more, integrated with content and training so businesses can not only monitor and manage multiple workflows in one system, but train employees via one partner.

For more information, visit **hsi.com**