Blended Learning
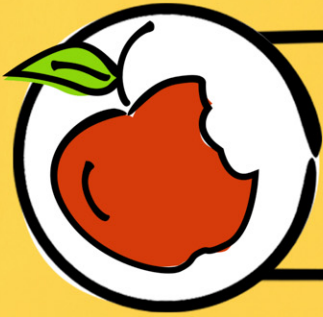
Freaking out about the decline of classroom training?

You need this tasty guide to blended learning.

You've heard that voice. It's saying blended learning is the end of the classroom, budgets aren't growing to match training demands, and that it's only a matter of time until you're replaced by technology. These concerns are a natural response to a shifting professional role, but facts and figures point toward a brighter future for corporate training.

Traditional, face-to-face, classroom-style instruction is still at the core of corporate training and not abandoned by the wayside. While it's true that corporate training is evolving to blend technology with human expertise, this doesn't equal the end for corporate training professionals. Instead, this evolution speaks to the ever-increasing demand for training and the high value placed on human expertise.

More people need more training now, more than ever before. As the speed of life and work continues to accelerate, organizations need to keep employees up-to-date to compete. Human training professionals simply can't handle the volume of demand. This is why blended learning is on the rise. It uses technology to support, to supplement, and to make the most of human training expertise beyond the limits of a physical classroom. Jump into blended learning, and you'll see your effectiveness and influence soar.

Before you jump in...go ahead and decide to eat your vegetables, so that you can fully focus on the how-to guide you're about to explore.

Table of Contents:

Despite the increasing flexibility, availability, and accessibility of technology-based methods, the traditional, instructor-led, face-to-face classroom continues to play a crucial role, and it was still the **delivery mechanism for 51% of learning hours** used in 2015.

51%
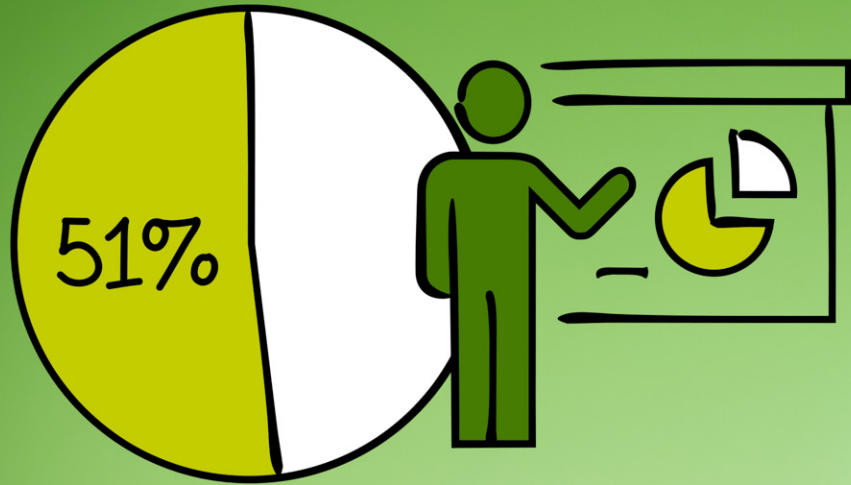
ATD 2016 State of the Industry Report

Definition of
Blended Learning

Blended-learning programs instruct with a combination of digital, eLearning experiences, and in-person classroom experiences. This approach to corporate training has become increasingly popular and continues to grow, because it brings two complementary elements together: an expert, intuitive, responsive human element and a standardized, accessible, portable "e" element. This equation is the simplest way to define blended learning:

Trainer + eLearning = Blended Learning

The Discussion:
Is blended learning really so simple?

Blended learning is an established term. It's generally accepted by training experts, used in companies around the world, and it's simple to define. So why are training professionals still spending so much time discussing it? There are two things that contribute to the ongoing, ever-evolving blended-learning discussion.

First, there's the fact that one of the main blended-learning components, eLearning, is infinitely flexible. You can deliver eLearning by TV or laptop or mobile phone. It can be in the form of a video or podcast or user-advanced screens. eLearning content can appear on social media too. And as technology evolves, so will blended learning's possible forms.

Second, there's the fact that there are multiple models for blended learning. Instead of having a single, set way to combine its basic human and "e" elements, blended learning gives us options. The result? A tangled, hairy mess of media and model options that can fuel blended-learning discussions for decades. This same mess of options also gives blended learning a fantastic advantage over other training approaches. It can be adjusted to perfectly fit virtually any audience or learning need.

The Six Basic Blended-Learning Models

Each model's structure is a solid, helpful starting point for building a blended-learning program. Plus, each model makes it easy to imagine a distinct experience from the perspective of learner or trainer. Have a look, and let your imagination run if you like. You'll see which models are best for corporate training.
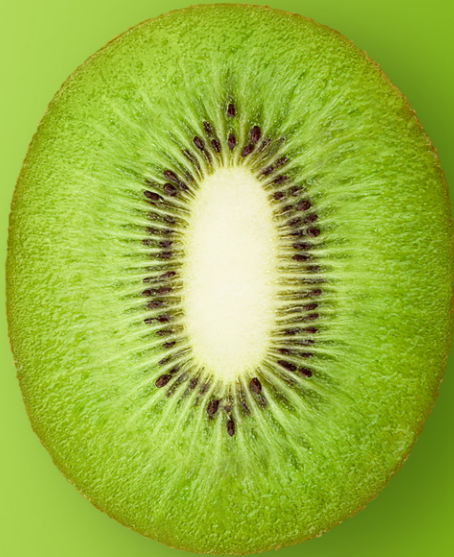
Face-to-Face Driver
A trainer drives the instruction, which typically takes place in a classroom, and augments with eLearning tools.

Rotation
Learners cycle through a schedule of independent eLearning segments and face-to-face classroom time.

Flex
Most of the curriculum is delivered via eLearning with trainers available for face-to-face consultation and support.

Labs
A full eLearning curriculum in a consistent physical location, such as a classroom. Learners usually take traditional classes as well.

Self-Blend
Learners independently choose how and when to augment their traditional classroom instruction with eLearning content.

Online Driver
All instruction is eLearning content and face-to-face meetings are regularly scheduled or offered as an option, if necessary.

What Makes Learning "e"?

Blended learning's technology component, eLearning, has many names: computer training, web training, online learning, video instruction, even m-learning (or mobile learning). Podcasts, wikis, blogs, texts, and content shared on social networks can all be eLearning as well. Still, it's a pretty easy thing to nail down, if you just remember this: **eLearning happens when someone learns by directly interacting with an electronic device.**

eLearning Technology in the Mix

27.4%

3.6%

2.7%

1.4%

64.5%
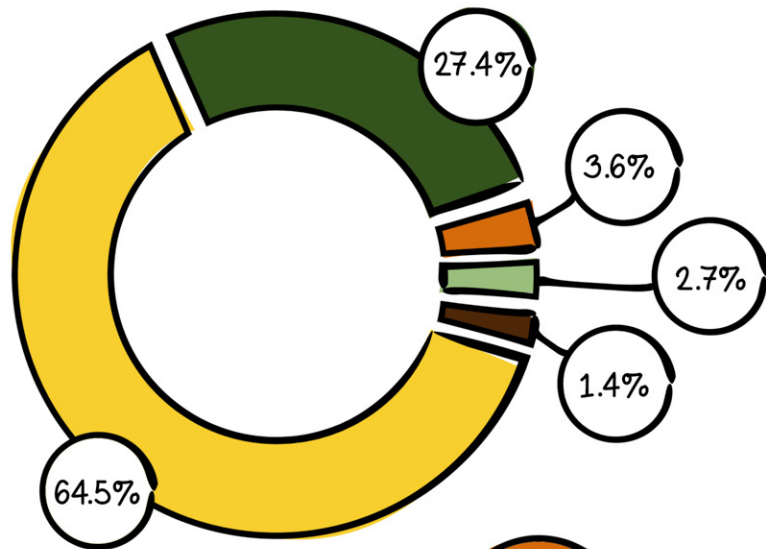
This chart shows that the bulk of training hours are purely instructor-led, with self-paced and technology methods playing support roles.

- All Self-Paced
- Other
- Mobile Technology
- Noncomputer Technology (e.g. DVD, audio CD, etc.)
- All Instructor-Led

? This breakdown of learning hours should act like a prune smoothie...and get you going.

A Deeper Dive into eLearning:

Want a firmer fix on eLearning? These 4 defining details should do the trick:

- **The learner is not directly focused on the trainer.** The trainer could still be present though, in situations when eLearning videos are facilitated in a classroom.

- **The learner directs the experience.** They decide the sequence, time, and even the amount of information that's covered in a particular learning session.

- **The content must stand on its own.** It cannot have gaps, rely on added explanation to make sense, or leave major questions unanswered.

- **The experience must help learners resolve conflict.** When there is a clash between existing knowledge and new understanding, content must help learners sort it out.

The Human Element:
Your Part in Blended Learning

You may not realize it yet, but you are ready to be the human element in blended learning. You are ready for this new, more influential role. You are ready to have a more interesting and less repetitive job. You are ready to exercise your instructional-design muscles in a new way. You are ready to facilitate delivery of effective, performance-building content to a wider audience. And most of all you are ready to be eLearning's ideal, much-needed counterbalance. Without you shaping and guiding it into the right tool for training in your organization, eLearning can't live up to its full potential.

Expect to be crucial to success. The success of any blended-learning program depends on you, just as it does in other types of training programs. When you're the guiding influence in charge of introducing blended learning to an organization, you have the power to shape that program and build your ideal role within it. Because blended learning offers multiple models and eLearning is so flexible, there are many paths you can take.

Take a minute now to explore what your next career step could be like, as the essential human element in a blended-learning program. The list of potential responsibilities on the next page will bring that future to life for you.

Imagine the Possibilites for You and Your Team:

- Lend subject-matter expertise and skills to the creation of eLearning courses.

- Add value to off-the-shelf courses.

- Produce additional materials to fill existing gaps in off-the-shelf courses.

- Provide classroom training and use eLearning videos for pre-work.

- Conduct live webinars and online seminars that reach a broader audience.

- Create a customizable curriculum of eLearning videos plus classes, books, and printed materials.

- Assist designers, programmers, and graphic artists in creating courses.

- Develop a branded learning portal with a wide array of resources for learners.
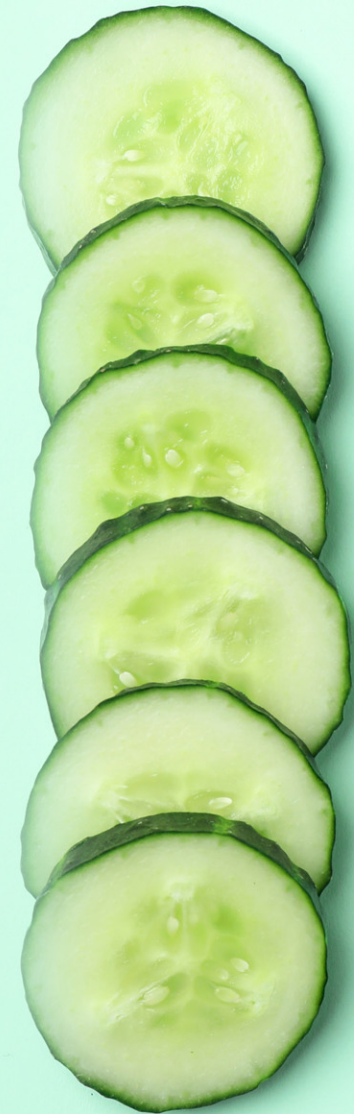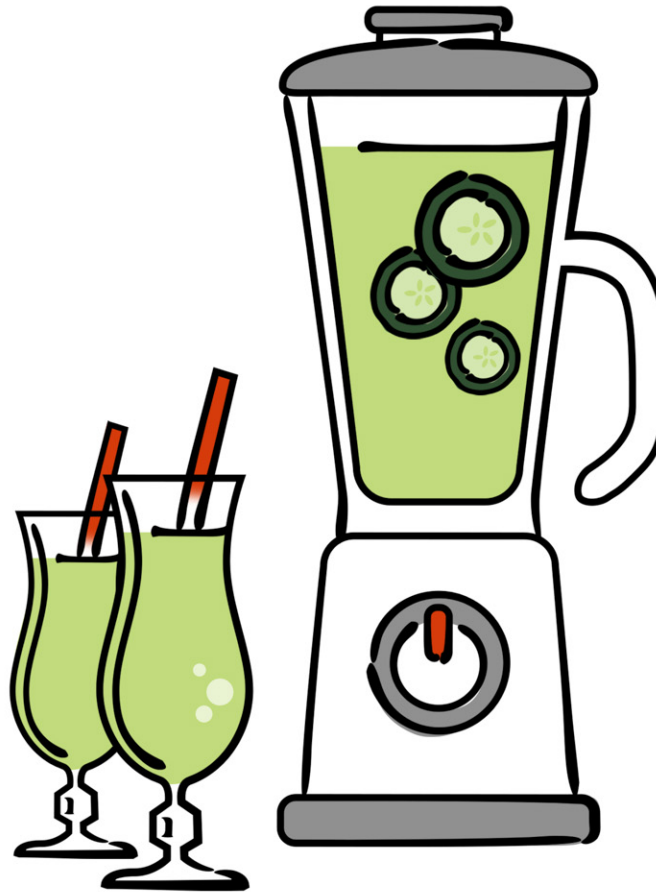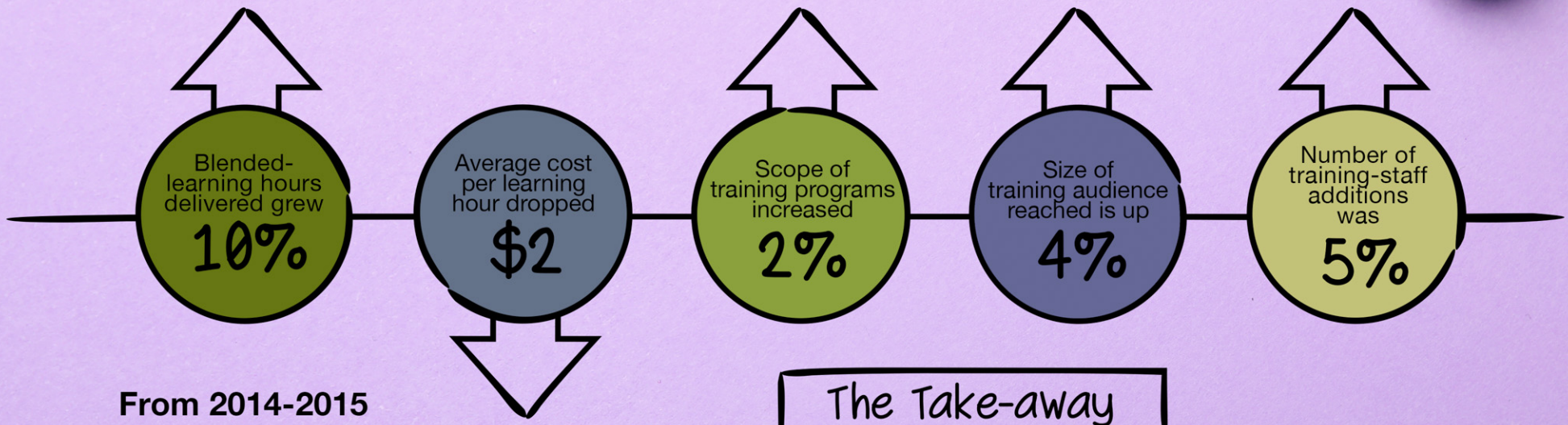
Train More Hours for Less?

Yes, please!

Budget limitations are usually the first objection corporate-training professionals face when they suggest adoption of blended-learning methods.

This easy-to-digest snapshot of blended learning's positive impact should help with that. Feel free to lift it for your next budget-related or program-planning slideshow. You have our full support.

Blended-learning hours delivered grew
10%

Average cost per learning hour dropped
$2

Scope of training programs increased
2%

Size of training audience reached is up
4%

Number of training-staff additions was
5%

From 2014-2015

The Take-away

Budgets grew (42%) or remained flat (41%) for this period, but spending effectiveness went up, inferring that blended-learning growth has no negative impact on budget and demonstrating that it has a positive impact on program cost/hour, scope and reach. Skeptical readers, it's also worth noting that blended learning could have contributed to more new training staff hires, too – making it the opposite of a career killer.

15
Blended-Learning *Benefits*

Think blended learning seems too complicated to be worth it? Here are 15 reasons why you should consider it seriously for your next training program launch – **5 reasons each for trainers, learners, and organizations.**

Blended-Learning Benefits:
For Trainers

1 **Less Boring Repetition:** Are you tired of repeating yourself? Don't fight it. Videos and other standardized student materials are perfectly suited to messages that need to be delivered consistently, over and over, to all learners. Use these tools when you can, and set yourself free to address the more customized training topics.

2 **Practice Session Relief:** Practice sessions are a valuable way for learners to put information they've just absorbed into action. Still, you probably like the idea of having less of your classroom time devoted to this tedious aspect of process training. With blended learning, you get that. eLearning can take on the responsibility for practice sessions, and even deliver personalized feedback.

3 **Time for The Big Picture:** When eLearning carries some of the burden of your training responsibilities for you, you gain more time to spend on evaluation and creation. Out of this comes better activities and exercises, better audience understanding, and better post-training performance on the job. In a blended-learning scenario, there is a lot you can delegate to your eLearning "assistant."

4 **A Future-Proof Career:** Adapting to blended learning will ensure your expertise stays highly desirable and relevant. Younger generations of learners are more comfortable interacting with technology than people. Blended learning's eLearning element helps reach these learners more effectively with fewer distractions and a lighter cognitive load from human interaction.

5 **Broader Impact and Reach:** Blended learning enables your dreams for sharing the helpful information you deliver to a wider audience. You're no longer confined to the boundaries of a classroom, and can expand the impact of your expertise. Imagine spreading your training influence far and wide and reaching people all around the world. Blended learning makes it possible.

Blended-Learning Benefits:
For Learners

1 **Better Classroom Experiences:** It's disengaging, even annoying, to wait while others in the room review details about material that's off-topic. Blended learning's eLearning component gets everyone on the same page for shared class time, with pre- and post-class work. It's a more respectful use of time, and makes classroom experiences more universally meaningful and interesting.

2 **More Time for What's Important:** It's an all too common work scenario we would all rather avoid: sacrificing precious office or personal time for travel. Blended learning reduces the inconveniences and disruptions that come with travel by reducing demands for learners to be assembled in a physical location. We can all use more time in a day. Blended learning gives some back.

3 **Easy Access for Multiple Reviews:** Often, the lessons learned in training are preparation for situations that don't arise until later. This is where blended learning's digital delivery of videos and other materials really shines. Learners can review material on the fly, exactly when and where they need it. This helps turn vague recollections into truly helpful, confidence-building instruction.

4 **Answers to Personal Interests:** Learners who are self-motivated can pursue knowledge beyond what's required for their jobs, thanks to the cost-efficiency and flexibility of online content delivery. For instance: an introverted and quiet employee could learn to be more assertive with a series of training videos. Individuals driven to learn more see opportunities like these as valuable benefits.

5 **A Collaborative, Social Community:** When part of the training experience moves online, it's easy for people who meet in the classroom to connect and keep learning even when they're miles apart. All it takes is the right technology. People are already sharing content on social media. Social learning technology harnesses that habit to build views, conversation, and communities.

Blended-Learning Benefits:
For Organizations

1 **Consistent Learning Experiences:** Blended learning enables better standardization of learning across all sessions, reducing the inevitable differences that can come from individual personalities. This is desirable in all programs, whether the concern is compliance with regulations, safety, consistent customer communications, or soft skills.

2 **Better Measurement and Oversight:** With blended learning, you have sophisticated eLearning technology in the mix, a real advantage when it comes to tracking participation and results. Each phase of learning can be tracked in real time, and this data is a valuable tool for improving strategy, increasing impact, showing ROI, and identifying areas for development through classroom work.

3 **Personalization and Privacy:** Learners enter training with varied knowledge, skills, and comfort levels. Blended learning's eLearning element helps equalize these barriers to effectiveness. Use of eLearning helps ensure baseline knowledge before entering the classroom and gives learners freedom to fail without exposure, creating safety that lowers anxiety and enhances classroom time.

4 **Budget-Friendly Accessibility:** Blended learning makes the benefits of training accessible to all learners, not just those who work in particular locations or with set schedules. With eLearning in the mix, training is available to a larger audience on demand, 24/7/365, and content can be replayed over and over all without a cost burden or placing heavy demands on training professionals.

5 **Flexible, Speedy Delivery:** When it comes to customization freedom and quick response to needs, blended learning offers the best of both worlds. It creates valuable opportunities for classroom trainers to focus on specifics related to a brand, location, or audience interest. It also leverages eLearning to reduce rollout time by removing many physical limitations.

How to Plan for
Blended Learning

If the previous pages in this eBook have served their purpose, you're feeling confident about the advantages of blended learning and inspired to move toward implementation. Congratulations on replacing nagging doubt with inspiration! That's a great place to be.

The five steps outlined here will focus that burning fireball of positive energy. It would be a shame to let it swirl randomly and fizzle out due to lack of clear direction.

Follow the directions in all the steps to clearly define a training objective, audience, and desired outcome for your first blended-learning program. This plan is designed to help make sure your first ever blended-learning experience is an enjoyable, rewarding, successful, and one that you'll happily repeat.
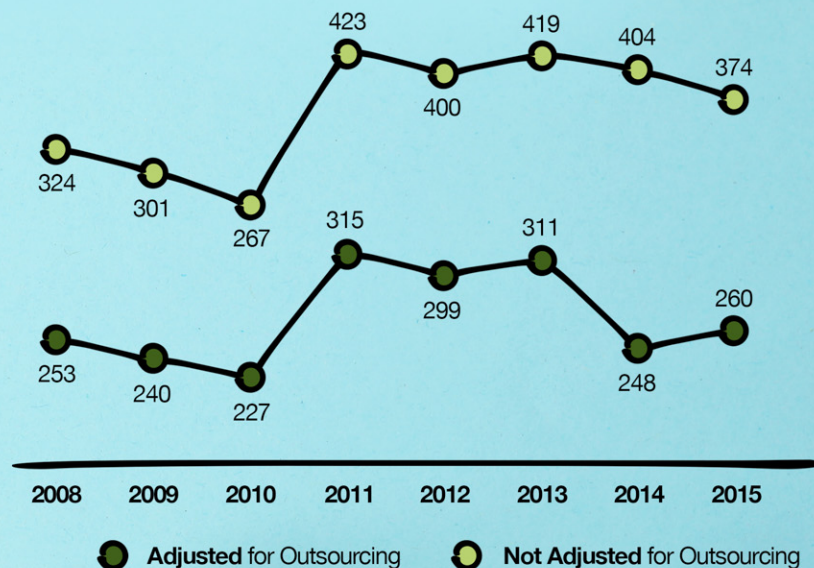
Outside Resources:
Allies, not Threats

A quick look at the numbers shows that outsourced learning and development support isn't a threat to your job; it's protection for your sanity. Outside training specialists (such as eLearning video providers) supply much-needed expertise when it comes to creating eLearning support for your classroom training programs. Invite outside resources in with confidence. Enjoy the relief they provide that will enable you to meet training demands more effectively, without feeling like you're stretched to the limit with no time to devote towards big-picture planning.

How many is too many?

L&D Staff Member to Employee Average: With an average of 260 or 374 in 2015 (depending on whether you include outsourced resources or not), it's clear that you can't be face-to-face with everyone, regularly.

Outsourcing and technology help overcome the physical limits of space and time, making your responsibilities manageable instead of impossible.

Average Employees per L&D Staff Member
(Adjusted vs. Not Adjusted for Outsourcing)

Year	Not Adjusted	Adjusted
2008	324	253
2009	301	240
2010	267	227
2011	423	315
2012	400	299
2013	419	311
2014	404	248
2015	374	260

● **Adjusted** for Outsourcing   ○ **Not Adjusted** for Outsourcing

Your Ideal
eLearning Partner

As a training professional, you inherently have half of a successful blended-learning partnership in place: the human element. More good news: you don't need to be a programmer or a graphic designer or a videographer to make eLearning content that supports your vision. What you need is a great content creation partner.

No matter what eLearning methods or media you choose, you'll rely on this content creation partner to take your thoughts and turn them into real, teaching experiences. This makes it important for them to be not only creative, but also strategic. When they are, they'll ensure your first (and future) blended-learning rollouts fire on all cylinders: **consistency, customization, delivery, measurability, and engagement.** Here are some things to consider in each of these areas, as you research content partners and explore possibilities.

Consistency:

With content that's produced and rolled out methodically, consistency really isn't an issue. This is why many corporate trainers who rely on off-the-shelf eLearning videos choose a content partner who offers an LMS, or learning management system. With an LMS, consistency and other eLearning aspects become foolproof and easy.

Customization:

Existing learning modules are a great starting point for blended-learning programs. However, they'll only get you so far, and may not answer the exact needs or culture of your organization. When you're shopping for content partners, be sure to ask about creation of customized content. Even if you don't want this option now, you may later.
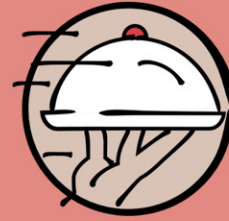
Delivery:

Today's technology supports practically instant delivery of eLearning content. You don't have to have an internal LMS of your own for this. You do, however, want to be confident that your content partner has a proven, responsive, scalable system in place. Ask for evidence, such as a demo or case studies.

Measurability:

Fast-paced business demands report on progress, even when there hasn't been enough time to fully realize the potential of a training program. This means you need solid numbers to share sooner and later. Choose a content partner who can help you address this by tracking content views, sending follow-up retention quizzes, and more.
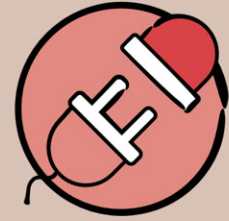
Engagement:

Today, we're all professional TV watchers. For this reason and others, video is arguably the most immersive, powerful medium for eLearning. If it can adjust to your needs, by all means take advantage of video's ability to engage more senses and make a strong, lasting impression.

Video eLearning:
Benefits and Uses

Imagine capturing your best-ever classroom presentation, adding some memorable bells and whistles to it, and offering it for infinite re-watching online. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the advantages of video. Yet it's a clear illustration of how quickly it can free up time and save money on travel costs.

The advantages don't stop there, though. Video's use of movement and sound is demo-friendly and instantly captivating, keeping learners engaged longer than other types of learning content. Video also has the power to reinforce learning with audio and video.

Now that you're excited about the possibilities, here are some ways video supports classroom learning. In other words, ways you can add it to what you already do to create a successful blended-learning program.

Pre-Work

Off-the-shelf video is often used as pre-work for an instructor-led program. When learners watch videos to establish base-level knowledge prior to entering the classroom, it gets everyone up to speed and sets instructors up for more engagement with less wasted time.

Group Training

Avoid the inevitable scheduling hassles and "misses" of training an entire department. Perfect your message, record it on video, and deploy it to everyone online. Everyone gets the same presentation, and they get it in exactly the same way, when it fits their work schedules.

Retention

Many classroom programs send learners away with notes or a binder that rarely get revisited. That information is lost, because it's misplaced or not part of an established routine. With video, it's easy to pull something up, for a second or even third rewatch, and apply the information learned.

Follow-Up

For learners who are locked into the expectation of classroom learning, try using video reviews as follow-up. You can run the program as before, and simply follow up with an email link to a video that talks through the major learning points that were covered in the class.

About Us:

HSI offers training, safety management and compliance solutions for businesses of all sizes. Our combination of technology and content solutions help safety, human resources and operations leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements.