



WHITE PAPER

Six Ways Off-the-Shelf Content Brings Value to Your Organization



Whether designing a new training program or simply searching for the right training tools for your existing program, quality content is the first priority. However, as training teams are stretched thinner and thinner and asked to do more with less, there's a danger the quality of instruction and service can suffer which could lead to a higher risk of mistakes or events.

This challenge makes using "off-the-shelf" (OTS) content that much more important.

OTS content can allow a team to immediately deploy needed training quickly and professionally without overextending existing resources or adding new ones.

OTS especially helps smaller teams that need to focus on core tasks and might struggle to keep up with best practices in instructional design or recent developments in content areas (for example, newly deployed equipment).

Using OTS content does not simply save time. It provides a number of advantages, especially when it is integrated into an organized training program. Understanding the value OTS content can bring helps organizations get leadership buy-in and make wiser purchasing decisions, especially with technical training.

While working closely with our own clients in implementing off-the-shelf content, we identified six key areas of value:

1. Efficient use of resources (cost)
2. Quick deployment
3. Leveraging best practices in adult learning
4. Understanding complex and changing regulations and laws
5. Consistent content
6. Content within a structured training

Efficient Use of Resources

While many departments can rely on technology and automation for greater efficiency, training is still very much a “hands-on” business that involves people directly. Not only are subject matter experts involved in creating content and leading classroom instruction, but instructional designers are needed for scheduling, assessments, program review, production, and more.

According to a study by Chapman Alliance, **a single hour of instructor-led training can take from 22 to 82 hours of development time, with the average around 40 hours.** **Online training takes even longer to develop ranging from 49 to 716 development hours for each hour of training depending on complexity and engagement level.** The lower end is simple page turners while the high end includes gamification and simulation.

With so much time dedicated to creating and deploying training, it’s difficult to focus on strategic considerations which makes it harder to demonstrate ROI to leadership.

OTS content can free up resources used to create “standard” content to focus on areas that will deliver more value in the long run at a lower cost.

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Quick Deployment

With an OTS content library, providing employees the information they need is simply a matter of enrolling them or giving them access. **Your teams can have access to the content they need on day one of onboarding, allowing consistency and repeatability.**

If you're developing content in-house, you can only deploy at the rate at which your team creates the content. The more course requests you receive, the more difficult it is to get training developed and launched.



OTS gives you the ability to immediately respond to your organization's needs **with timely and relevant training.**



Leveraging Best Practices in Adult Learning

The training industry has had many developments in the past decade. Microlearning and social learning are used more and more with many workers taking training on mobile devices. Strides have also been made in technology and creative design for visuals and acting/voice talent.

With these ongoing advances, subject matter experts and instructional designers need to be experts in graphic design, script writing, slide creation, video production, editing, and more. **Make sure your training vendor is investing in the talent and technology to stay on top of innovations.**

Adult learners are motivated when they see a **connection between learning objectives and activities and their own work.**



However, while keeping up with these innovations is important, making sure your training includes a strong foundation in adult learning theory is critical. Adult learning theory is based on the premise that adult learners are in charge of and need to be active participants in their learning. Since they bring a wide range of experience and perspectives to training, they're likely to be motivated when they see a connection between learning objectives and activities and their own work.

Subject matter experts and instructional designers should provide opportunities for adults to use what they already know and apply what they are learning in the training environment. **When adult learners are actively engaged in the training process and allowed ample opportunity to participate, they learn by doing.** Participation creates a chance for adults to take part in their own learning experience and retain what they practice whether it's classroom, online, or on-the-job training.

Understanding Complex and Changing Regulations and Laws

Besides keeping current with best practices in adult learning, some subject areas, such as qualified electric workers, need to stay current with complex and changing laws and regulations.

This challenge creates a one-two punch. On one hand, changes in law may require different kinds and amounts of training. States may add their own requirements to federally mandated training. **You need to stay on top of the changing compliance environment.**

With changing equipment and technology, course content may become obsolete with time. What was considered best practices a decade ago may not be adequate today. Even if your training requirements don't change, the information your employees need to receive might.

When shopping for OTS content, you must make sure the content provider has a process in place to stay current with these changes, and update the training on an ongoing basis. These updates should happen every few years at the very least.



You need to stay on top of the changing compliance environment.



OTS online training is **delivered the same way every time**, providing a firm foundation for your workers.



Consistent Content

Many organizations lean on classroom and on-the-job training for their workers. Unfortunately, that makes them reliant on the training skills of their instructors and senior workers conducting the training. Regardless of how carefully training is developed, the delivery will differ based on who is teaching.

By providing consistent training, all workers get the same information in the same manner, so any issues are quickly identified and addressed.

Any OTS training provided by a vendor should focus on giving your workers a consistent understanding of theory, procedures, and equipment.

Content within a Structured Training Plan

Learning a skill is more than just absorbing content. Content itself is just one part of a more complex training program that includes strategy, technology, training progression, management attitudes, and more.

Therefore, finding the right content for your organization is more than finding an article or video on a particular topic.

How that content fits into your overall program and increases worker competency is key to a successful training program.

A reputable learning partner should have processes in place to help you and answer any questions you may have along the way.

- Choose content that aligns with your organization's goals and values.
- Match content to job descriptions and competency-based learning tracks.
- Organize content into learning paths for professional development.
- Record completion and measure retention.

Challenges with Outsourced OTS Content

OTS content brings many benefits to the table. However, we need to recognize it comes with some limitations. These limitations do not mean OTS content is a bad idea for an organization – only that it might not be a good fit for all situations. Some common sense needs to be applied when shopping for content and integrating it into your own training programs.

Challenge 1: Familiarity

When your team creates a training course, they are intimately familiar with it. Over time, you and your team know your library inside out. When you purchase OTS from a vendor, everything is new and unfamiliar. Getting familiar with that content takes time, even if you are diligent about watching every single course. A quality vendor should help you navigate the new titles and associate the appropriate training with your workers' job tasks.

Challenge 2: Control

With content created in-house, your team is 100% in control of what gets said and what gets seen. You can tweak and change things as the content is created. You don't have that level of control with OTS content, although some companies – including HSI – will discuss options for custom content.

Challenge 3: Customization

As discussed, sometimes you need training specific to your organization. Even if the

majority of your training content can be satisfied with OTS offerings, some topics – company policies or industry-specific language – require custom content.

Challenge 4: Depth

Some OTS content has a reputation for being superficial because educational materials have to walk a fine line between being maximally informative and widely accessible. A good library should have content at different levels of depth and expertise. For example, a safety course should cover topics differently for employees on the warehouse floor versus the people who manage them.

Challenge 5: Leadership Buy-in

Change can be hard, and many decision makers are more comfortable with keeping training content creation in-house. You and your team have to explain the value of OTS content and justify the investment. Even then, the new content and delivery will be under the microscope, making measurement and reporting critical.

Incorporating OTS Content into Your Organization

OTS content works best when you find smart ways to blend the existing content with your own content and form it into well-considered learning paths.

Here are some ideas:

- **Build specific learning paths, using OTS content as the building block.** You can group individual courses into a curriculum to create a training sequence for employees.
- **Use OTS training as the basis for a custom course.** You may need a technical course that provides a basic overview of how to operate a piece of equipment, but require a section that talks specifically about how the equipment is used in your facility. You can start with OTS training, then customize it, adding not just your company logo and introduction, but content specific to your needs.
- **Assign OTS content as a course prerequisite (or refresher).** You may already have courses developed for certain topics. If these are in-person training courses, assigning an OTS course is a great way to expose workers to those topics before they even step foot in the classroom. They can also serve as a good refresher for experienced workers.

Maximize your training team's time and expertise by making OTS content part of your training program. Whether you make it a key component of your program or integrate it with your specific classroom and on-the-job training, OTS content will help you deploy training quickly without overextending your resources.

About HSI



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