ALESYS
Learning for a Change®

Applied Learning Systems, Inc.

13500 Progress Blvd Alachua, FL 32615

800.758.1071
386.462.5562

What's All the Hype about e-Learning?

What is e-Learning anyway?

E-Learning refers to the placement of training content into a format that can be delivered to Learners through any electronic medium. It includes such formats as CD-ROMs that can be inserted into a Learner's desktop and played any time, individually or with others sitting with the Learner. E-Learning may also include any training content that has been made accessible through the Internet or a corporate Intranet. That type of e-Learning is also called web-enabled training.

Is e-Learning the best choice for your company?

While e-Learning is all the buzz in training circles these days, always remember that it is only a vehicle for delivering learning content. And, as such, it only achieves results in proportion to the quality and appropriateness of its design, the relevancy of the topic to the Learner, and the constraints of the learning environment. The upside to e-Learning is its delivery flexibility. Your employees can participate in an e-Learning opportunity at almost any time, if the technological capabilities are available.

E-Learning is a great format for just-in-time training. When an employee has an immediate need to learn a new skill, or refresh something that they have already learned, they can use an e-Learning program quickly at their workstation. E-Learning can also enhance classroom training. By creating a blended solution using several training formats or methodologies, you can increase the effectiveness of most training.

You can also track Learner progress through the electronic format's measurement capabilities. Be careful to track only those issues that have true relevance to your organization, or you'll be swimming in data that no one wants to evaluate! Plan to track things like completion rates of e-Learning content, action plans that have been developed by Learners as part of their e-Learning experience, and how well Learners did on certain critical assessments that have been built into the training. Remember, however, all of the issues that have plagued training effectiveness for many years are still present with e-Learning. Issues like Learner motivation to learn or coaching of learned skills on the job are still present, they just manifest themselves in slightly different ways.

So, is e-Learning the best choice for your company at this time? Read on, and you'll uncover more key issues to consider as you make this important decision. You certainly don't want to make an investment of this scope without good data to back up your decision.

A p p l i e d
L e a r n i n g
S y s t e m s ,
Inc.

13500
Progress Blvd
Alachua, FL
32615

800.758.1071
386.462.5562

All e-Learning is not created equal!

Much of the e-Learning content available today is just like classroom training. Some of it is basically just words from a book or training manual put into an electronic format. Other e-Learning offerings are just bulleted PowerPoint® presentations. Some products simply add sound or animations to these other forms of training.

The main concern with any training, including e-Learning, Facilitator-led, paper-based self-study books, and on-the-job mentoring, is that all formats of training must be designed using a methodology that will help the Learner remember and use the information. Without that methodology, the training is not going to work, regardless of the technology. Training is just too important to your bottom line for a simple approach to be taken. You can't afford to assume that because something calls itself "training," it is capable of causing behavior change and performance improvement on the job! Performance to your company's standards is a complex achievement. Many factors must work together for performance improvement to occur and be maintained over time. Find a high-quality vendor who knows how to design and develop powerful, behavior-changing training. Most importantly, select one who has a proven reputation in the field of workplace learning. Check out their design and development process, and then talk with some of their Customers. Remember the old adage, "You get what you pay for!"

What training content is most suitable for the e-Learning format?

While it may seem that all training content could be converted into an e-Learning format, that transformation is not necessarily appropriate. E-Learning is very effective for self-study types of training content. So, if you have some training content that has been identified as a good fit for self-study, it would most likely be appropriate in an e-Learning format, IF your Learners can access that format and are willing to do what it requires of them to learn the content. That big IF should not be assumed! You'll want assurances that all the right factors are in place to make your investment in e-Learning pay off.

Caution! Before a program is designed in an e-Learning format, it should first be developed in a paper-based format and then converted into your e-Learning format. While leaving out this critical step is tempting, you must take the step to ensure a well-designed program that will achieve the desired behavior change on the job. Another caution is to consider the Learners' comfort with technology before assuming they will be successful in the e-Learning environment.

All of ALᴇSʏs' programs are Designed for Learnability℠, which is our guarantee to our Customers of a quality-built learning program. Our robust instructional design process ensures that all of ALᴇSʏs' training programs produce lasting behavior change on the job, whether the training is delivered in the e-Learning environment or through more traditional forms of instruction. ALᴇSʏs can also help you evaluate your Learners' needs in order to assess which format will work best to achieve your organization's training goals.

ALESYS
Learning for a Change®

**A p p l i e d
L e a r n i n g
S y s t e m s ,
I n c .**

13500
Progress Blvd
Alachua, FL
32615

800.758.1071
386.462.5562

Finally, e-Learning is effective for training content that does not change very often, such as foundational knowledge about a topic, steps in a process, or how to fit into your company's culture. If you have the internal staff capabilities to continually maintain and change training content in the e-Learning format, then you'll have more flexibility in the types of training content you can put into that format without too much expense to keep it up-to-date as your business changes and grows.

Learning is not just a one-time event!

No matter what the format is, learning is not just a "one-time event." For any training to be ffective, it must be supported and reinforced back on the job by Team Leaders or Coaches who know what the Learner has been taught and who are skilled in coaching performance improvement. The Learner must be motivated to learn, and must be skilled in learning effectively from the e-Learning environment. Learning effectiveness must also be measured, both during the training and back on the job. After all, performance improvement is what you are paying for when you put your people through training. Consequently, keep your focus on the real purpose of training — to help your company accomplish its mission and vision, and achieve bottom-line results. Integrating many factors will help ensure you get a solid return on your investment from any training format you choose.

Summary

Even though e-Learning is often touted as the cutting-edge way to learn, it still has the same problems that training has always had. Relevancy of the topic to the needs of the Learner, motivation of the Learner, quality of the design and development of the content, appropriateness of the delivery format, and transfer to job application with proper coaching to sustain performance improvement must all be well-managed to ensure behavior changes. Though the e-delivery format enables the efficient collection of data to determine training effectiveness, don't assume this vehicle provides the most effective training solution. E-Learning is an important delivery vehicle, but that's all it is! It won't solve all your organization's training problems. Be careful not to put all your eggs in this one basket!

ALESYS has the experience and expertise to help you evaluate your training needs and create comprehensive programs that will meet and, hopefully, exceed your expectations! If you would like more information on how ALESYS can help your organization make solid decisions about the training offered to your employees, call us at 800.758.1071 or visit us online at www.alesys.com.

Michael E. Prescott is a consultant with ALESYS.

ALESYS is a Florida-based consulting and training company with a focus on leveraging learning to help achieve organizational goals and generate business profits. We know from our many years of successful work with organizations all over the world that for organizational change efforts to be effective, only a custom-designed approach will yield results. These results must not only solve organizational issues, but also translate into long-term sustainable change and profitability.