

Learning in the 21st Century – How is it different?

Fewer resources, reduced time-to-market, and greater demand at a lower cost are challenges facing most organizations today. The fact that technology changes at the speed of light adds another layer of complexity to organizational survival and success. How can organizational learning take place with an environment with so many constraints?

The short answer is that organizations need to get more focused, innovative, and selective about how learning takes place in the organization. No longer is it a viable option to send personnel to the latest professional development program on the market. Learning has to be meaningful and have immediate and direct application to the job. When managed effectively, employee education and learning can be a valuable organizational and strategic asset to the company.



Tasha Delaney

E-Learning is one solution which helps create flexible learning opportunities for employees because it allows them to learn in a convenient, easily accessible, self-paced format. E-Learning is Internet-enabled learning which includes instruction, information, communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. It includes the

capability for content delivery in multiple formats; management of the learning experience by employers; and a networked community of learners, content developers, and experts. E-Learning is an attractive delivery format with many advantages for employees and the organizations they work for. Some of these benefits include:

- Provides increased access to learning
- Can be more economical and faster than traditional learning
- Available 24/7
- Can be spaced over time
- Available just-in-time
- Is self-paced
- Can be individualized to specific needs
- Is accessible from anywhere
- Reduces travel costs.

Just like any learning solution, an organization must assess E-Learning to determine if it's an appropriate fit. When dealing with issues such as the need for quick information dissemination to users across a wide geographic area, E-Learning may be appropriate. On the other hand, if an organization determines that employee learning requires peer networking, expert explanations for difficult concepts, and honing of specific participant skills, then a face-to-face event in a classroom format might be a better option.

According to Dr. Michael Allen, author of *Michael Allen's Guide to E-Learning: Building Interactive, Fun, and Effective Learning Programs for Any Company*, designing instruction that is "meaningful, memorable, and motivational" is important for all forms of instruction, and is most critical to the success of E-Learning. Allen says that one downfall of some e-learning is

the potential for it to be presented in a way that is uninteresting, boring and ineffective. The worst type is that which presents boatloads of content with pages and pages of text and not much else. Effective e-Learning should be presented in a way that keeps the reader interested and excited about the information in order to facilitate learning and retention.

As a professional in the learning field, I think E-Learning has its place. It is certainly not the only approach when it comes to learning, but when it is integrated into a blended learning approach I think e-Learning can be extremely effective. I think learning is richest when it blends a mix of formats, media and experiences and provides learners with opportunities to communicate, collaborate, and share knowledge with others. A blended solution provides the opportunity to give learners a more complete, fully rounded learning experience than cannot be provided by any one format or event.

Tasha Delaney is the Founder and CEO of Transfers of Learning, LLC, (ToL) a performance consulting organization. Transfers of Learning (ToL) was started in March of 1996 out of Delaney's desire to develop a flexible, supportive, virtual organization that could respond to the need for improved performance in organizations. ToL has achieved state and national

certification as a Women Business Enterprise and was the recipient of the 2002 Kutztown University Small Business Development Center Service Award. Delaney's experience and educational background are in the areas of training and organizational development.

As a performance improvement organization, ToL collaborates with customers to create and transfer customized solutions that unleash the power of human potential. ToL improves individual, team, and organizational performance that results in improved efficiency, increased productivity, higher morale, enhanced job skills, increased compliance, and more. Some of ToL's solutions include: organizational design, technical and soft skills training (including e-Learning solutions), teambuilding, leadership development programs, procedure development, and process improvement.

For more information, contact ToL at info@transfersoflearning.com or 877-819-2881.