



The Future of Learning

Benchmark Study 2007

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Foreword

Towards the end of 2006, SkillSoft commissioned two separate surveys; one amongst senior level executives in the corporate HR community and one with over 5,000 people, all of whom were in full time employment, ranging from junior positions to managers and director level employees.

Our aim was to compare and contrast the employees' view of training and development with that of employers. Specifically, we were looking for whether there were any synergies between what the employees wanted to learn, and the way in which they wanted to develop their skills, with the training made available to them by their organisations. Are employers out of step with the training they provide? Or are the learning needs of employees being fully met? We were also interested to see how the impact of technology was changing the way organisations were delivering their training and the extent to which this technology was being embraced by the employees. Finally, we wanted to look to the future and establish how closely the vision of the HR community matched that of the employees; are the provisions being made by

organisations in line with how employees want to learn in the years ahead; or is there a disconnect in expectations?

Some of the results were surprising; and some were what we expected. There are many areas where the learning and development community has much to be proud of. Indeed, in many of the organisations we surveyed, there are some outstanding programmes in place that are making a significant and positive difference to the skills and knowledge of the workforce, which in turn is having a positive and tangible impact on the effectiveness of those organisations as a whole. In many of the organisations involved in this research there are robust competency frameworks in place to ensure their employees develop in line with the needs of their business. Interestingly though, there is little consistency in the nature of these frameworks. They range from those that are comparatively simple to those that are highly complex. However, regardless of the type of structure they have, in each case they seem to be working effectively for the organisations that use them.



“The future will all be about just-in-time training, training that people can take out in the field, at home or wherever they happen to be. So, increasingly, I think what’s happening is that we’re turning to things like e-learning and bite-sized learning.”

Charles Abbott, BDO Stoy Hayward

Many companies have taken the conscious decision to give their employees considerable autonomy to develop their skills and have made a wide range of training available across their organisations. Line managers still have a role to play in approving the training taken but in many organisations, particularly those with e-learning, the depth and breadth of the training done is at the employee’s discretion. As a result, the competence and skills base of the organisation continues to expand and those we interviewed said the gain to their business was evident in many ways.



“So, the future: we are seeing a number of interesting trends starting to happen. Informal learning is becoming more and more apparent. The fact that probably 70% to 80% of what people learn is actually on the job rather than formal training. So, somewhere along the line, we need to be thinking to the future and structure this learning and make it work a bit more.”

Ian Shaw, Nestlé Purina

There was evidence of increased productivity, particularly in areas like sales, customer service and IT, as well as improvements in retention rates and in some cases, a higher level of personal job satisfaction or an increase in satisfaction with the skills of managers and other leaders.

The results also indicated that the trend towards informal learning will continue as more and more

organisations understand the value that this type of learning brings. In fact, many of the organisations that participated in this study are making a concerted effort to support informal learning to exploit the benefit that it produces. In addition, there is evidence from the quantitative survey that companies are actively promoting the sharing of information amongst their staff and encouraging employees to pass on their knowledge and expertise to their peers. A large majority (73%) of the employees who participated in the research said that they were actively encouraged to share their skills and experiences with others.

Yet, in other areas, we noticed that the same challenges we have seen in previous studies have yet to be resolved. The issue of time once again raised its head: 40% of those surveyed said they didn't have time to do the training they needed. And perhaps because of this, there were a number of instances where employees had been asked to take on roles they felt they hadn't had enough training for. IT and desktop tasks fared the worse, followed by customer service activities. And a number of employees said they had been asked to carry

out tasks relating to management and leadership tasks without adequate training.

Looking to the future, the views of employers and employees were remarkably similar. There was a wide expectation that the way in which people learned would evolve, with mobile learning taking a greater share of the training mix. Learning via laptops and PDA's will increase, and blogs, wikis and podcasts are all predicted to grow as learning tools. Not surprisingly, the employer group also talked about blended learning and how they anticipate it will grow in sophistication, becoming increasingly tailored to meet their employees' needs.

However, arguably the most gratifying finding from the research, cited by both employees and employers alike, is the acknowledgement that training is critical to the corporate capability of an organisation. There was widespread belief that having a corporate learning culture was one of the best ways an organisation could grow and thrive.

Kevin Young

Methodology

Two separate but complementary surveys were carried out simultaneously.

The first survey was a qualitative study, consisting of in-depth, face-to-face interviews with senior HR executives in large organisations who were responsible for all, or a significant part, of the training strategy and delivery for their respective companies. The organisations were from a cross section of industry sectors, all with either a global or European remit. 16 organisations were interviewed as part of this study and included: Atos Origin, BDO Stoy Hayward, DHL, GSK, HBOS, ING Direct, LloydsTSB, Nestle, PAREXEL, Pilkington Group, Reuters, Royal Bank of Scotland, SITA, TDK, T-Mobile, and Virgin Atlantic.

The second survey was a quantitative study consisting of a web-based survey, open to anyone who was in full time employment. Over 5,360 people participated and almost all industry sectors were represented, as was most of the public sector. The majority of job functions were covered (see figure 1) and those participating ranged from junior level through to senior level employees.

Job functions (figure 1)

Engineering		4.3%
Finance		11.0%
Human Resources		5.2%
IT		13.5%
Manufacturing		2.8%
Medicine		6.6%
Operations		12.2%
Teaching/Education		10.4%
Customer Service		21.7%
Sales and Marketing		12.3%

6% of the sample were at director level; 25% were managers; and the remainder were junior employees. Both male and female employees of all age groups from 18 upwards were well represented.

The employer group and the employee group were asked similar questions and their answers were

compared and contrasted to assess the similarities and differences between them.

The web-based study took place during late September and early October 2006. The in-depth interviews were carried out between September and November 2006.

The Results

Employee engagement

In order to understand what might happen to training in the future, we began by trying to establish a baseline of the existing custom and practice prevalent in the learning arena at the moment. As a starting point we wanted to determine what the HR community was focusing on and the extent to which they felt their training initiatives were making a positive impact on their organisation. We also wanted to assess whether those who worked in organisations used the training available to them (if indeed there was training available) and what their views of it were.

In this research, the HR professionals who participated were all from large, pan-European or global organisations across a number of industry sectors. As a result, their areas of focus were widespread and often company specific. However, in a number of areas there was some commonality of purpose. Most noticeable in this regard was the fact that many are striving to take a holistic view of the learning needs of their organisation, incorporate all the delivery methods

they can, and then successfully manage the increasing complexity that this involves. In spite of the difficulties this entails, many seem to be managing this with considerable skill, with evidence that the right training is getting through to the right people at the right time.

Equipped with the insight gained from the HR professionals we had interviewed, we then

implemented a large scale web-based survey with over 5,000 people, all of whom were working full time in a wide range of organisations, primarily based in the UK. Firstly, we asked them if their organisation had a training programme in place and if so, what level of involvement they had in it.

Encouragingly, the majority of employees (67.6%) were able to say that there was a comprehensive



“ The complexity can be a nightmare and that’s one of our challenges. But we are getting to grips with it in a number of different ways. We are trying to achieve greater consistency across our programmes whilst creating greater simplicity for our population of employees. The key thing to ensure when you have such a high degree of complexity is that the right training gets through to the right people at the right time.”

Andrew Wright, GSK



“We had a big HR open day recently which showcased everything we have available. It was like a big open market place where people just toured around all the different things. This really helped understanding and it’s been really important to just re-energise the workforce every six months or so.”

Rhian Langham, ING Direct

training programme in their company. However, over half of those (52.9%) said that they didn’t feel actively involved in this programme.

As expected, this differed noticeably by job function. Predictably, those in HR management are the most engaged, with 70.5% saying they feel actively involved. However, this level of engagement doesn’t occur amongst those in junior HR roles. This group are almost evenly split with 55.5% saying they feel engaged but the remainder saying that they don’t (see figure 2).

Percentage of employees who feel actively involved in their organisation’s training programme (figure 2)

Sales and/or Marketing – Junior role		44.7%
Sales and/or Marketing – Management role		62.9%
Operations – Junior role		45.2%
Operations – Management role		59.0%
Manufacturing and/or Production – Junior role		42.3%
Manufacturing and/or Production – Management role		61.5%
IT – Junior role		34.0%
IT – Management role		38.6%
Human Resources – Junior role		55.5%
Human Resources – Management role		70.5%
Finance – Junior role		38.2%
Finance – Management role		52.0%
Engineering/Technical – Junior role		37.7%
Engineering/Technical – Management role		61.5%
Customer Service – Junior role		37.2%
Customer Service – Management role		61.2%



“Short one and two hour sessions are hugely popular. But they don’t just happen though. They are very well publicised, with a whole communications package built around them. They are well promoted and are pushed through the organisation using intranet, messenger and email. Line managers are involved too – telling people how they can benefit from doing the learning.”

Jeanette McMullen, T-Mobile

Interestingly, this was a pattern repeated across various job disciplines, i.e. the management level consistently feels more involved in their organisations’ training programme than those at a junior level. The biggest differences were amongst those working in customer service and engineering. In both cases the managers were significantly more engaged (61.3% and 61.5% respectively) than those who worked for them. Of the junior customer service employees, only 37.2% feel involved and in engineering the figure is not dissimilar (37.8%)

The one area where this differs is amongst IT professionals. In this group both the managers and the junior levels feel equally disengaged from the

training on offer, with 61.4% of IT managers and 65.2% of their staff saying that they are not actively involved in their organisations’ skills development programme.

Obviously, if an employee doesn’t feel actively involved in a programme they are unlikely to get the best from it. Once this happens, it runs the risk of becoming a wasted resource, its value is diminished and all too often the budget then gets directed elsewhere.

It may be, however, that these findings reflect a trend in some organisations to concentrate on developing only their managers and above. If this is the case, then these organisations should consider the potential risks they face in having poorly trained

employees in key areas like customer service, engineering, and more critically, IT.

Or it may be that those responsible for engaging employees in training and development initiatives need to improve the way these initiatives are communicated and delivered. Best practice would suggest that the internal marketing of training initiatives is not only taken seriously, but actively



“We currently deliver training using live meeting, webcasts and blogs for the sales force in particular... whatever best fits the need.”

Chris Hutton, SITA

pursued. Yet, proactive marketing of training is not usually the norm.

However, as this study shows, when it is done, and done well, the results can be quite remarkable. For example, at ING Direct, frequent publicity sessions ensure that not only are employees made more aware of the training available to them, but in terms of e-learning, they are more likely to make use of it. And, at T-Mobile, the HR team have developed a communications package around some of their training programmes to ensure that the take up by staff is high.

Quality, value and impact

Predictably, in the current learning environment, instructor-led training in a classroom is still the way that most employees are likely to do their learning. 59.5% of employees in the survey said that they had spent some time in a classroom developing their skills in the previous six months. Not surprisingly, asking a colleague is still viewed as one of the best ways to



“Ideally, whenever and wherever people want to learn, there should be an available option for them so they can use their time effectively – via their mobile phone, PDA or another platform. It should be true any time, any place learning.”

Colin Dibben, LloydsTSB

learn with just over half of the employees (56.9%) saying that they had learned something from asking a colleague recently. e-learning is making its presence felt too, though, with 42.4% of employees saying they were actively using it, and 60.3% saying they had some form of training available via their desktop.

Inevitably, use of e-learning is highest amongst the most techno-savvy groups, with IT managers taking the lead, followed by managers in operations. Over half of the employees in these groups (59.1% and 57.3% respectively) are doing training on-line.

As expected, e-learning is least prevalent in the manufacturing sector amongst junior roles, with only 34.6% having taken on-line training. Unexpectedly though, amongst junior employees in sales and marketing, this figure is only slightly higher with just 35.9% saying they have had exposure to e-learning. In both these instances, the way individuals are most likely to learn is by asking a colleague.

In terms of the quality of the training on offer, employees were divided in their opinions as to how effective it was. Almost half (46.6%) rated the training

they had received as either ‘brilliant’ or ‘good’. However, just under one third (30.6%) rated their training as ‘could have been better’, and 10.6% rated it as ‘completely irrelevant and boring’. Interestingly, 12.2% said they had received no training at all in the last 12 months (see figure 3).

Whilst it is reassuring that almost half of employees highly rated the training they had received, the fact that 43.5% were less than complimentary about their training should give some cause for concern.

This would suggest that there is a tranche of training being delivered that is not meeting the needs of the learner. This presumably means that it is not developing the skills or knowledge it has been designed to, it is wasting employees’ time, and is consuming training budget that would, arguably, be better spent elsewhere.

The HR community frequently talk about how the success of the organisation relies on the continual skills development of their employees. So, given this,

it was surprising to find that over half of those surveyed (51.3%) said that their perception was that their organisation only placed ‘some importance’ on training; whilst 21% thought their organisation placed ‘no importance’ on training at all. Less than one third (27.8%) said that their organisation placed ‘great importance’ on training and learning. It would appear from this that there are some organisations which need to improve the perceptions amongst their employees as to the value the organisation places on developing their skills.

The apparent lack of importance attributed to training may be due, in part, to the fact that in some organisations, training still isn’t given the emphasis it should. Indeed, when asked whether they were allocated any specific time to learn, only a quarter (25.9%) said that they were. Consequently, it’s not surprising to find that 41% of employees said that they simply didn’t have time to learn.

One of the potential consequences of this is that some employees are carrying out tasks for which they are

What has been your experience of training received in your current job? (figure 3)

Training? What training?		12.2%
Really boring		4.8%
Completely irrelevant		5.8%
OK – but could have been better		30.6%
Good, I got something out of it		36.4%
Brilliant – very relevant, useful & informative		10.2%

ill-equipped. Almost two thirds of employees (64.1%) said they had been asked to carry out tasks in areas where they felt insufficiently trained or where they were lacking in the necessary skills. These tasks were widespread and included areas like customer service delivery, health and safety, compliance and management skills such as leadership, team working and managing people (see figure 4 for a full list).



“Across HBOS we have a common system of performance management and identification of development,

so this ensures that all colleagues across HBOS are receiving the same attention to their learning and development needs. The media for addressing those needs may well differ between different areas of the organisation but every colleague is assessed in the same way.”

Barry Hughes, HBOS

Tasks relating to... (figure 4)

Compliance issues		9.5%
Health and safety issues		11.9%
Problem solving skills		12.1%
Customer service skills		11.9%
Technical skills		27.3%
Communication skills		9.0%
Business skills		13.4%
Desktop skills		16.1%
Managing people		16.5%
Leadership		12.4%
Team working		9.3%
Other		1.6%

* Respondents were allowed to select more than one option

The critical role of managers

One of the most consistent findings to emerge from this research is the increasingly critical role that line managers are playing in the skills development of those who work for them. In the employer group, the role of the manager was seen as key for a number of reasons. In some organisations they are responsible for

defining the training requirements of their teams; in others they are encouraged to promote a learning culture; and in many they are responsible for measuring the effectiveness of any training that has taken place.

None of this will come as a surprise to those HR professionals who have spent time and energy

ensuring that the line managers in their organisation are committed to the development of their staff. They will be gratified with the findings, which showed that 62.8% of the employees surveyed said that they were encouraged to develop their skills by their boss. And there is no decline in terms of management encouragement amongst the more senior levels either; 68.2% of managers say their boss is supportive of their development. Even more satisfying for the HR community is that 77.5% said that they were actively encouraged to share their skills and experiences with others. Clearly, this kind of knowledge sharing is a widespread practice in many companies and there is a great deal of recognition of its value in growing skills.

The importance of the line manager is never more critical than when they have control over deciding who can participate in the training available. And, once again, the managers score highly. A large majority (84.6%) of employees said they found it easy to get approval for training from their manager if required. This was fairly consistent across all job levels. Giving managers this responsibility is something that



“We talk about something called shadow of the leader – it’s not just about having good training so that people know exactly what they have to do and how they have to do it; it’s also about our managers and our leaders reinforcing and encouraging that behaviour and ensuring good habits and good practices within the business as well as modelling the right sort of behaviours.”

Andrew Wright, GSK



“We encourage them to talk to their managers and make sure that their learning needs are addressing the ones they get their manager’s support from. Because obviously they’re going to get more time in work and they’re going to get more encouragement.”

Roy Prescott, Pilkington Group

most of the HR professionals we interviewed had very definite views on. There was a consensus of opinion that involving managers in the training decisions was beneficial for all concerned.

Employee productivity

As part of this study we wanted to assess whether employees felt they received sufficient training to do their job effectively or whether there was a gap in their skills development. At first, the results appeared reassuring. 62.3% felt they had received enough training to do their job effectively. But when asked whether they could do a better job if they received more training, 65.9% said yes. Arguably, this is not surprising – there will always be a number of employees who feel they need additional training. However, the percentage that responded in the affirmative to this question should give pause for thought.

Those employees who said that more training would make a difference to them were then questioned as to what benefits they felt additional training would bring. In this instance they were allowed to cite as many benefits as they thought would be applicable. Unexpectedly, top of the list, with 57.8% of employees citing it as the main benefit, was “being more

confident in my job.” Usually, the outcome of training is measured in the development of job related knowledge. Personal benefits, such as an increase in confidence, are either overlooked or forgotten. What was particularly interesting was that the managers and the senior managers were in line with the total sample as a whole in feeling that additional training would make them more confident. In both cases, just over



“Managers are critical in spotting talent as well as being absolutely critical in developing skills. If you do anything without management involvement and accountability it is likely to disappoint.”

Charles Jennings, Reuters

“In terms of e-learning we like to involve a line manager so that managers value it and give employees the time to do it.”

Jeanette McMullen, T-Mobile

half (56.9% and 56.6% respectively) cited an increase in confidence as a key benefit (see figure 5). Not so surprisingly, the second most cited benefit was ‘being more competent’ which was mentioned by 40.7%. 45.3% said more training would make them a ‘better asset to the company’; 33.9% said it would enable them to ‘use their time more effectively’; and 32.4% said they ‘would be more productive’.

Focusing on the learner

As part of this study, we were particularly interested to establish how learners would prefer to learn and if there was a correlation between their preferences and how organisations are planning their learning programmes in the future. The top five preferences of the learners were:

1. Being able to get at information as and when I need it.
2. Being in charge of my own learning pace.
3. Attending classroom courses.
4. Learning in bite-sized pieces.
5. Learning at my desktop.

These preferences would suggest a strong desire by the majority of employees to be in charge of their own learning, getting information as and when they need it, wherever they happen to be. The HR executives that participated in the survey are fully aware of this trend and, without exception, agree that the learning needs of their employees, and how they like to learn, are critical. In all of the organisations that participated in this survey, there were a variety of programmes and plans in place to ensure that these requirements were being met.

Examples included the provision of on-line training that could be done in bite-size pieces; enabling access of learning resources at home; increasing

Which of the following do you think might apply to you if you were given more training? (figure 5)

I would be able to enjoy a better work/life balance		23.4%
I would be less stressed because I would be more effective		26.3%
I would be a bigger asset to the company		40.7%
I would have a better chance of promotion		27.7%
I would be able to use my time more effectively		33.9%
I would feel more confident		57.8%
I would be more competent		45.3%
I would be more productive		32.4%

* Respondents were allowed to select more than one option

availability of on-line books and referenceware; more support for just-in-time training; having blended solutions that allow employees to pick and mix; and offering specific facilities in the workplace that could be used before or after working hours.

Having some, or all, of these options available to employees is indicative of the shift in emphasis away from 'corporate push' towards 'learner pull' and in particular to 'self-directed' learning. This trend towards self-directed learning appears to be moving training in the direction of what is typically known as informal learning and, as a result, the boundaries between the two are becoming increasingly blurred.

In some of the more sophisticated organisations, there is evidence that there are initiatives in place to 'formalise' some of the informal learning, bringing the concept, if not most of the practice, into the sphere of the training function. This effectively harnesses the immense value that informal learning brings and ensures that it has the widest reach possible.



“Anything that gets the learning more focused, so you’re getting exactly what you need when you need it is going to be the way forward. That could be self-managed learning, it could be the Internet, and it could be the use of things like blogs and sharing information. In fact anything that’s going to get relevant information out to people.”

Andy Cross, Virgin Atlantic

The trend towards autonomy

In addition to empowering managers to approve training and to facilitate the trend towards self-directed learning, many of the organisations that participated in this study were also moving towards giving employees autonomy to manage their own development. There was a tacit understanding amongst the HR professionals we spoke to that having a level of autonomy is inevitably high on the wish list of most employees.

As a result, there is a definite shift towards giving employees a choice in the learning they undertake. This trend has been accelerated by e-learning, which by its nature lends itself to self-directed learning. In our survey a quarter (24.2%) said that they were allowed to make their own decisions about what training they do; whilst almost one half (46.2%) said they were allowed to make their own decisions sometimes. Less than a third (29.6%) said they had no autonomy at all when it came to choosing their training.

The Future Vision

The employees had a very clear vision of what they thought the future would hold for them in terms of their learning. In the survey they were given an extensive list of training delivery methods and asked to indicate which methods they expected to be using in the years ahead (in other words, they could tick all options they thought would apply.)

From this, there was a clear consensus on the emerging prevalence of on-line learning in one form or another. Learning at the desk scored the most highly with 38.1% of employees anticipating that this would be one of the main ways by which they would get the training they needed. There was also an unequivocal view that training and learning would happen 'wherever I am'. Over one third (34.4%) say they expect to be learning 'wherever I am via my laptop or computer'; 6.3% expect to be learning 'wherever I am via a virtual classroom'; and the same percentage expect to be learning from podcasts and /or webcasts via their MP3 player. Interestingly, less than 2% (1.8%) expect to be learning via computer games, despite the



“There’s still a big need out there for small snapshots of learning... we need more video, more interaction, screen shots and camera shots showing people how to do something. Bite-sized chunks and lots more ‘how to’ pieces.”

Colin Dibben, LloydsTSB

pervasiveness of this perceived trend amongst some learning and development professionals.

The employers’ vision of the future of learning was not dissimilar to the employees’ view. The HR executives who were interviewed as part of this survey were all clear that there would be a continued shift towards on-line learning and that self-directed learning, as already indicated, would continue. There was also a widespread belief amongst this group that they were ready for the future and in some

organisations, new ways of delivering knowledge such as podcasts and webcasts are already in place.

Traditional instructor led training doesn’t have a large presence in the future according to those employees surveyed. Indeed, only 16.2% expected to be learning in a traditional classroom environment at an off-site location and only 33.4% expected classroom courses in the workplace to continue. Despite the growth in on-line learning, there is a perception that for some areas, there is still a need for classroom

instruction. As a consequence, the learning and development team in many organisations is actively engaged in developing blended learning programmes. The difference now, though, is that these programmes are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Those organisations who previously concentrated on blending classroom training with



“We very much leave it to the individual to decide the course that their learning path is going to take. We devolve all responsibility for training, or at least seeking out the training, to the individual themselves.

“We don’t make any restrictions with e-learning – they can study anything they like. The only stipulation we make is that if it’s in work time, any time spent training has to be relevant to their job.”

Charles Abbott, BDO Stoy Hayward

e-learning now find themselves having to take into account considerably more learning options.

And this brings its own challenges. Many of those interviewed acknowledged that in the short term, and possibly in the medium term, their focus would be on making all the training assets they have work harder for them.

With the early adopters in particular, all the wrinkles in their e-learning programmes have been ironed out. This allows them to concentrate on optimising its impact and effectiveness and blending it with other learning methods to more closely match the needs of the learner.

In return for making such a wide range of training available and matching it to the needs of the learner, many of the employers expect to see a certain level of commitment from the employee. As self-directed learning grows, the responsibility for developing skills and knowledge will lie more with the employee than before. Consequently, lack of commitment from the employee therefore is unlikely to be widely tolerated.



“We want to have a place on everyone’s PC where they go to get everything they need. Within that we’re going to have blogs and wikis so we’re going to use technology in a far more, open flexible way.”

Andy Cross, Virgin Atlantic

Conclusion

In conducting this research, there was one dominant theme which ran through the findings of both surveys. In some instances it was implicit, in others it was more obvious. Put simply it was this: the future of learning is closer than you think – in fact, the future of learning is here now. The visionaries, the early adopters and those professionals in learning who are passionate about what they do have embraced all that the future has to offer and are developing training programmes that are outstanding in the value they add.

As an HR community, if we want to effectively and efficiently develop our people we have to ensure that we optimise the resources and the information available to us. Furthermore, in today's competitive marketplace, it's clear that not only do existing and prospective employees want to be learning via the latest technology, they expect to be able to – indeed they will demand it.

Being timid when it comes to maximising the training assets of your organisation is not an option. What this research suggests is that anyone



“We have conventional class room training and we have a number of blended learning programmes but we also give people access to e-learning. For me, it’s not about bringing in an army of external trainers, and it’s not about having an army of internal trainers, it’s about making everyone part of the learning agenda. I believe we should let everyone buy into it and play a part – and in the training and development function, our job is to facilitate that happening.”

Ian Shaw, Nestlé Purina

responsible for the learning and development needs of their employees should take a long, hard look at how their training is deployed and consider whether it is being used to best effect.

As we know, conveying a message that training is important requires considerable time and effort. Building a sophisticated blended learning

programme is easier said than done. And implementing new technologies can present challenges to all involved. But just because these things are difficult certainly doesn't mean they can be dismissed.

In conducting this research, there were many examples of innovative ways in which some of the

HR professionals we interviewed were delivering training programmes.

We spoke to some truly creative and imaginative people with the passion and the will to make a difference, who have already embraced blogs, wikis, podcasts and all the other options that current technology has to offer. Through being bold, tackling the challenges they face head on, and with diligent planning and effort, they have developed and implemented training programmes that are reaping significant and tangible benefits for the organisations in which they work.

The lesson to be learned here is that if you aren't using ALL the resources available to you, and using them productively – with a clear understanding of how they are meeting the needs of your learners – then the potential gain to your organisation will be severely curbed.

If you are limited by resources, draw upon those you trust in your supplier base. If you are restricted by the creativity of those around you, look for ideas and

best practice within other organisations. And if you are challenged by budget issues, remember that an investment in learning technology can not only save your organisation money, but can train more people, in greater depth, across more locations than can ever be possible using traditional training methods.



“At Reuters one of the main tenets of our strategy is to effectively deliver the right knowledge and capability to the key points of need, using the most effective means, i.e. making sure people get what they need when they need it – using the right channels.”

Charles Jennings, Reuters

So, if you haven't already done so, embrace all that technology has to offer, demonstrate the immense value that learning and development can bring, and make a significant difference to the skills base of your business. Now is the time to seize the initiative and take your organisation's training to a whole new level of business impact.

www.skillssoft.com



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