# YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DESIGN HIGH-IMPACT BLENDED TRAINING PROGRAMS

by Asha Pandey, Chief Learning Strategist, EI Design

eidesign
ENERGISING LEARNING

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Asha Pandey is the Chief Learning Strategist at EI Design. She heads the organisation's Solution Architecting and Innovation teams and brings her rich 15 years' experience into play to help EI Design customers transform their learning and keep pace with the changing dynamics in the Learning industry.

A regular writer for various global Learning forums, Asha is one of the most recognised thought leaders in the industry. She also shares her insights regularly on a range of topics on her blog at www.eidesign.net/blog.

## ABOUT EI DESIGN

EI Design is a leading Learning and Performance Support solutions provider that thrives on transforming learning – keeping it alive, relevant and impactful.

In addition to **core solutions** such as eLearning and mLearning, Migration of Legacy/ Flash courses to HTML5, ILT/VILT and Blended Learning, EI Design offers a wide range of **trending solutions** such as designing learning for the millennial generation, responsive learning portal solutions, platforms for content curation, personalisation of learning and approaches to predict, measure and validate the learnability of online courses.

https://www.eidesign.net/about-us/

> ## IS INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING (ILT) DYING?"

No, ILT isn't dying.

But there certainly has been an increase in large-scale conversions of ILT materials to online learning.

While a lot of this is triggered by challenges on training budgets, I believe it also provides an opportunity to relook at the traditional format and enhance the training delivery.

Take a look at the following insight

According to the 2016 Benchmark Report: The State of Online Training, 'Technology has not decreased the demand for Instructor-Led Training, but gives instructors new tools to reach learners…The trend in Instructor-Led Learning is enablement through technology, both in hybrid and fully virtual delivery.'

# HOW WILL THIS EBOOK HELP YOU?

I have created this eBook as **a step-by-step guide** that you can use as you embark on the conversion of your ILT program to a Blended Training program. These inputs will certainly help you in creating a high-impact Blended Training program. More specifically, you can use the tips and best practices to optimise your current Blended Training programs.

**The eBook is structured into 5 sections, as shown here:**

### Section 1 – Basics

1. What is the Blended Training approach?
2. What is triggering the adoption of Blended Training over Instructor-Led Training or ILT?

### Section 2 – Benefits

1. What are the benefits that learners and organisations gain if they adopt a Blended Training approach over a traditional ILT?
2. How do learners respond to the Blended Training approach?

### Section 3 – Deployment

1. How can Blended Training be delivered?
2. Are there any specific models that can be used to determine how to offer Blended Training?
3. How can you determine what degree of blending would be most effective?

### Section 4 – Tips and Best Practices

1. Are there any best practices that can be used to increase the impact of Blended Training?
2. What are the tips you can use to create highly effective Blended Training programs?

### Section 5 – Blended Training in Action

1. Two examples on how you can enhance the impact of ILT by adopting a Blended Training approach
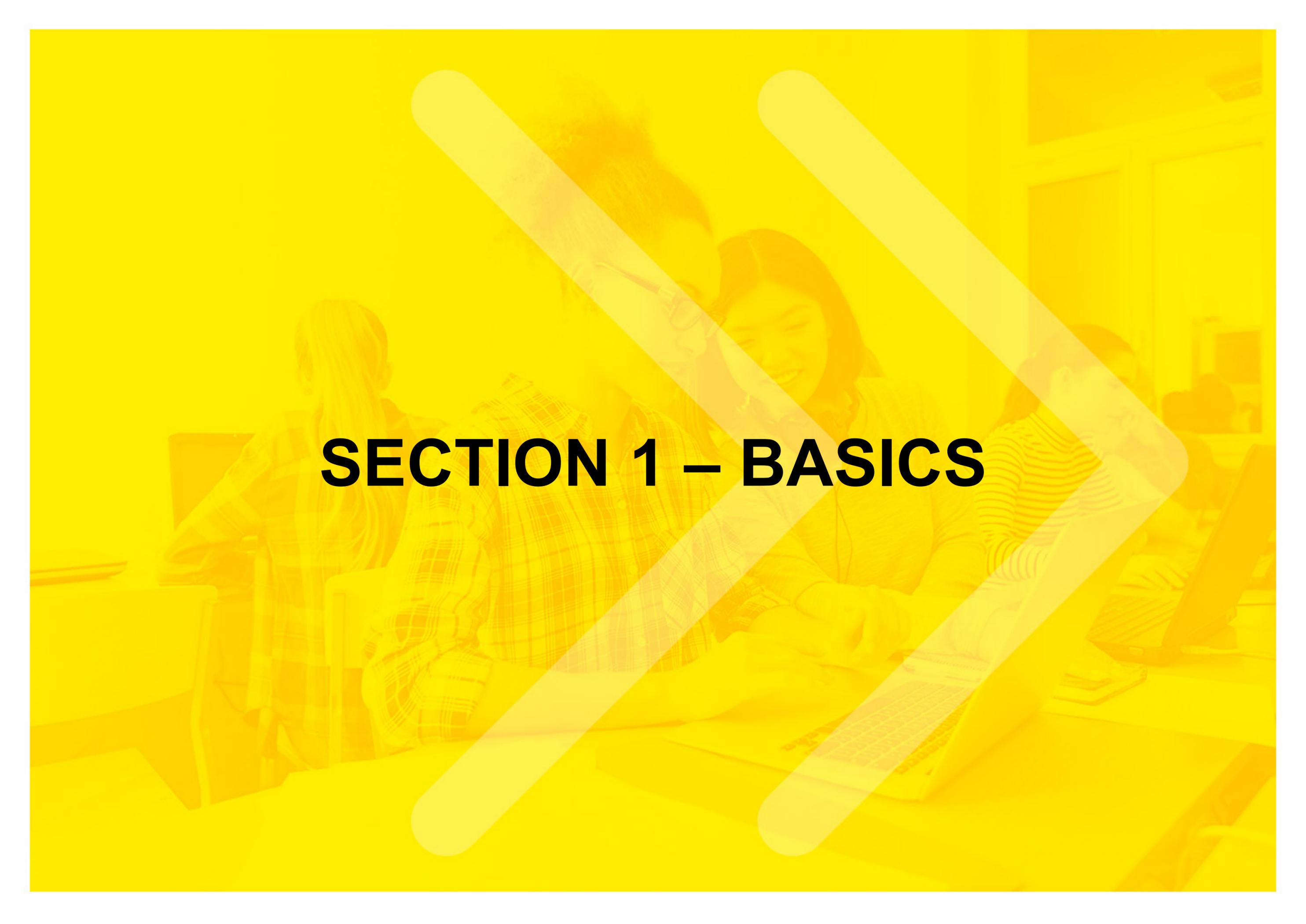
# SECTION 1 – BASICS

## What is the Blended Training approach?

As the name suggests, the term Blended Training (or hybrid training) combines different learning techniques. It offers a combination that brings in the best of both forms of training, namely:

1. Instructor-Led Training (ILT)
2. Online training (eLearning or mLearning)

As it offers a blend of both formats (facilitated as well as self-paced), it maps more effectively to suit the learning expectations of a wider audience.

## What is triggering the adoption of Blended Training over Instructor-Led Training or ILT?

The push from learners is probably the biggest factor that is driving the momentum to convert Instructor-Led Training or ILTs, into Blended Training (if not fully online or eLearning programs).

Certainly, the pressure on budgets and a need to reach a wider audience in lesser time are the two other significant drivers from organisational perspective.
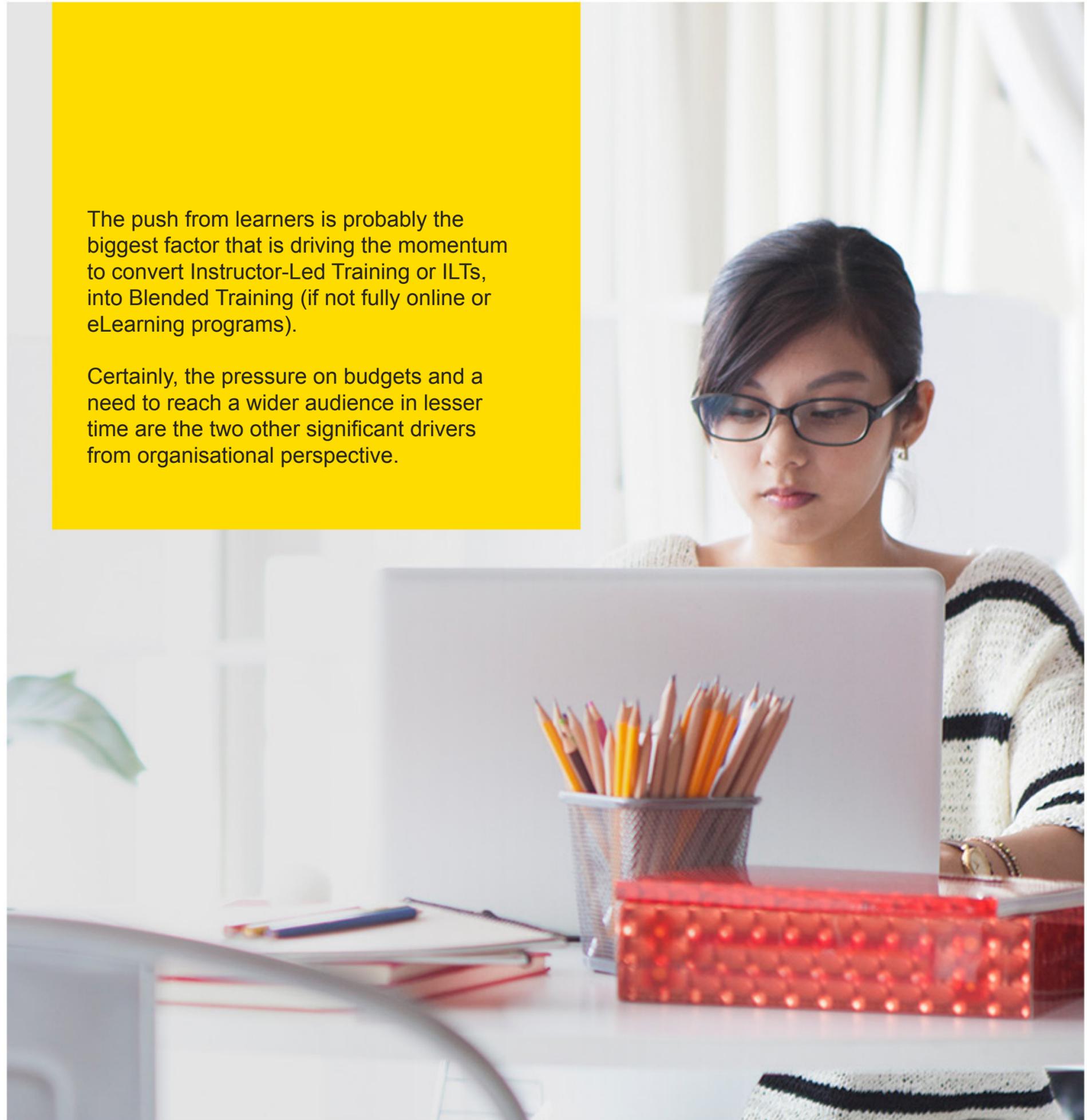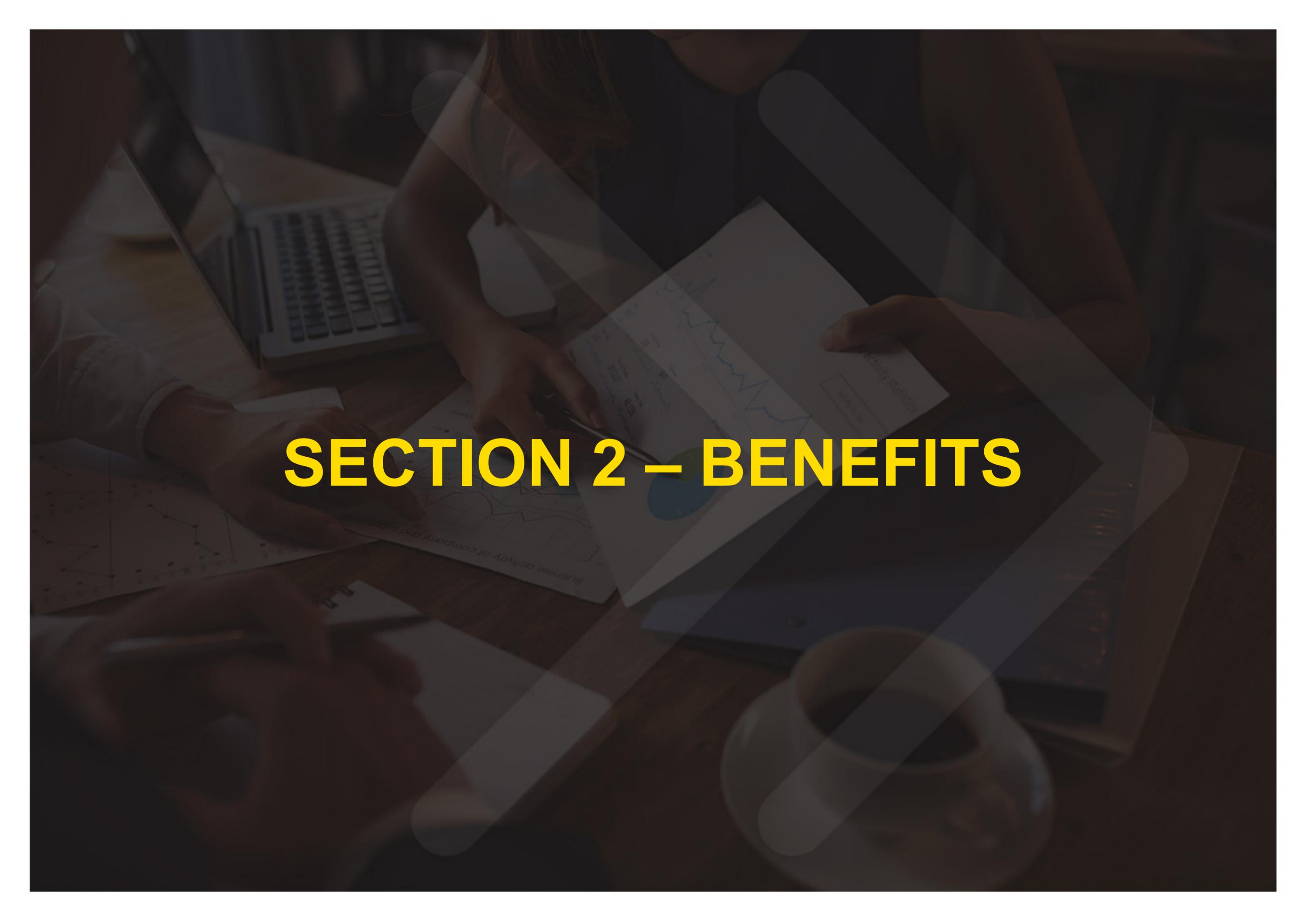
# SECTION 2 – BENEFITS

**What are the benefits that learners and organisations gain if they adopt a Blended Training approach over a traditional ILT?**

## Benefits for the learners

1. The Blended Training approach is learner-centric and provides better control to the learner in adjusting the pace at which they want to learn.

2. It also gives them the flexibility to pick up the online resources (in case they miss the ILT session or to refresh their knowledge post the workshop).

3. The supplementary online training provides them a self-paced learning track. Also, the online resources are available 24x7 now.

4. The Blended Training offers a significantly better collaboration, including online discussions, messaging, feedback and a platform to communicate with peers as well as instructors.

5. Research confirms that retention levels of online training are higher than face-to-face facilitated sessions. Therefore, Blended Training approaches lead to higher levels of retention for learners.

**What are the benefits that learners and organisations gain if they adopt a Blended Training approach over a traditional ILT?**

## Benefits for the organisations

1. From organisational perspective, Virtual Instructor-Led Training or VILT, (in contrast to the traditional Instructor-Led Training or ILT) enables organisations to reach a wider audience in a significantly shorter time.

2. As you convert an ILT program to a Blended Training mode, the seat time also becomes shorter. For instance, a 5-day face-to-face workshop may now need a maximum of couple of  days of workshop and you can balance the learning using online resources.

3. Additionally, the online framework enables the instructors to assess the learners' performance online and far more quickly.

4. More significantly, with a Blended Training approach, organisations can tap into the prevailing online strategies, like Microlearning, Gamification and Collaborative Social learning to create supplementary online trainings. Using these approaches provides an immersive learning experience aimed at better recall, retention and application.

5. The supplementary online courses or resources facilitate a continued learning post the workshop.

## How do learners respond to the Blended Training approach?

**Each learner has a different learning style and they relate differently to a given training format.**

✓

Blended Training offers a broader set of options to the learners and can match a more varied set of learning styles.

✓

Added to this is the flexibility that Blended Training provides – even if they miss the facilitated session, they have access to the same resources online now.

✓

Today, you can design online courses or supplementary resources to support multiple devices, including tablets and smartphones (besides desktops and laptops).

✓

Particularly, online supplementary resources can be designed using a wide range of innovative formats, like Interactive PDFs, eBooks/Flipbooks, Interactive Videos and so on.

✓

These can be accessed by learners on the device of their choice, when they need and as often as they require. All of these help the learners retain the information and re-use it when the need arises again.

# SECTION 3 – DEPLOYMENT

# How can Blended Training be delivered?

Blended Training solutions can be rendered in multiple ways, based on the nature of training.

Broadly, they map to:

**1**

## Virtual Instructor-Led Training or VILT

Here, the training is facilitated by an instructor (just like in ILT) but a virtual platform is used to connect learners who can be geographically spread out. The session integrates many online aspects like polling questions, online questions and breakout rooms to conduct group activities. These sessions can be recorded and made available to participants as an online learning aid. The instructor can provide pre-workshop material in an online format that is accessible to the learners. Online delivery also enables the instructors to obtain feedback quickly. Since the assessments are online, the results can be shared quickly and more significantly; this data can be used to track the learners' performance and determine the training impact.

NOTE: In this case, the primary training is facilitated or instructor-led; and eLearning or online training supplements it.

**2**

## Blended approach where ILT/ VILT complements the online or eLearning delivery

Certain training needs cannot be mapped readily to pure ILT or pure eLearning formats. In fact, they need both components. A good example is an Induction and Onboarding program where significant parts of the training can be offered in a self-paced, eLearning format. However, to successfully induct and onboard an employee, several components of this program need face-to-face sessions. In fact, some sessions will greatly benefit with group activities.

NOTE: In this case, ILT and eLearning-based training complement each other.

# Are there any specific models that can be used to determine how to offer Blended Training?

While Blended Training has its significant advantages, a lot depends on the approach that you use to 'blend' the face-to-face or ILT components with online training (eLearning or mLearning).

At EI Design, we have created three models that we use to determine how you should blend the two components. Our Blended Training design approaches would map to one of the following:

## Model 1

Significant face-to-face, ILT training and a small component of online training

## Model 2

An even mix of face-to-face, ILT training and online training

## Model 3

Significant online learning with short and focused face-to-face, ILT training

## How can you determine what degree of blending would be most effective?

As I see it, effective blending is both, art and science.

Let me share some techniques we have been using. This is a **Step-by-Step Toolkit** that is particularly useful when you are looking at first-time conversion of an ILT program to a blended approach.

**Select each step to know more.**

**Step 1:** Determine why blending is required.

**Step 2:** Validate the impact of the new approach (that is, the degree of blending).

**Step 3:** Identify the required technology support.

**Step 4:** Review the program mandate and the existing content to determine its suitability to adapt to a blended delivery.

**Step 5:** Review the Assessment strategy.

**Step 6:** Once these aspects are covered, you are ready to go.

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**Step 1:** Determine why blending is required. ⌃

At this stage, you need to identify the triggers that are prompting the need to transform the training format; and more significantly:

- ✔ Are there any challenges in the existing delivery that must be offset in the new format?

- ✔ What are the expected gains from the new format?

**Step 2:** Validate the impact of the new approach (that is, the degree of blending). ⌄

**Step 3:** Identify the required technology support. ⌄

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- ✔ Would the learners align to the new delivery format and get an enhanced value?

- ✔ Would the program mandate be met?

**Step 3:** Identify the required technology support. ⌄

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As you transition from face-to-face, ILT training to a varied degree of online training, you need to evaluate the options for delivery. This would include finalizing aspects like:

- ✔ Virtual Platform to offer VILT

- ✔ LMS to offer online training

**Step 4:** Review the program mandate and the existing content to determine its suitability to adapt to a blended delivery. ⌄

**Step 5:** Review the Assessment strategy. ⌄

**Step 6:** Once these aspects are covered, you are ready to go. ⌄

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Besides identifying the goals, the approach (the degree of blending), the technology and the desired impact, you also need to do an effective mapping of classroom-based activities and exercises to online format.

**Step 5:** Review the Assessment strategy. ⌄

**Step 6:** Once these aspects are covered, you are ready to go. ⌄

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| **Step 5:** Review the Assessment strategy. | ⌃ |

You also assess the current Assessment strategy and determine how it should be adapted to a blended delivery.

| | |
|---|---|
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- ✔ Create the Blended Training program design.

- ✔ Create an approach plan to implement it – Pilot, take feedback and deploy.

- ✔ Feedback and further improvement: After a suitable time, poll the learners and business units to determine its impact. Based on this feedback, determine if we need to recalibrate the previous blend.

# SECTION 4 –
# TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

## Are there any best practices that can be used to increase the impact of Blended Training?

There are several best practices that we have used in successfully creating effective Blended Training program designs. Here are a few best practices from our repository:

## Before you begin

1. **Establish learner roles and responsibilities:** As is true for a transition or transformation, there should be clarity on how the learners and the organisation would be able to leverage the Blended Training.

2. **Provide clear instructions and communication for the program.**

3. **Create an effective support system for the learners.**

4. **Create an effective support system for the corporate trainers.**

## Lay the foundation

1. **Strategy:** The Blended Training goals need to be identified in advance and these should also reflect the intended gains expected from Blended Training. The goals should be SMART (that is, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound).

2. **Approach plan:** Start small, but factor for its scaling.

3. **Identify the right project and identify the right team to manage:** Early success matters and provides crucial feedback to improve in future. Select a project that adapts more easily to a Blended Training model and can demonstrate clear gains. Have a dedicated team to monitor and manage.

4. **Checkpoint for continuous improvement:** Use the ongoing tracking and checkpointing to gather feedback for further improvement.

## What are the tips you can use to create highly effective Blended Training programs?

The impact of a Blended Training program design can be enhanced by using the following tips:

### 1.

**Develop content in a manner that allows you to calibrate the mix of blending easily**

This is vital for you to process the feedback and keep stepping up the impact of your Blended Training program.

### 2.

**Create learning activities that leverage on the power of both delivery formats**

For instance, a role-play (in a workshop) can be supplemented with online branching scenarios. This blending enables you to reinforce the learning and check how the learner is able to apply the primary learning in different contexts.

### 3.

**Use the online resources to support multiple mandates**

You can use them to prep the learners before a workshop. You can also provide these as online reference materials that they can use post the workshop and on the job.

### 4.

**Tracking**

Blended delivery facilitates keeping track of learner progress far more easily than ILT training. By the same token, it also enables you to share feedback with equal ease. Use these two aspects to keep the learners in sync with the learning mandate.

### 5.

**Assessment strategy**

Online assessments provide you with an approach with which you can test and share feedback instantaneously. You can randomise the questions, have different set of questions for different profiles and decide which ones should be formative/summative.

# SECTION 5

Examples on how you can enhance the impact of ILT by adopting a Blended Training approach

Let me share two examples that will help you see the value a Blended Training approach will bring.

# Example 1

Our platform **eSpace** – a unique online framework for offering ILT and Blended Learning that enables you to go beyond the traditional ILT/blended delivery to a new-age digital experience.
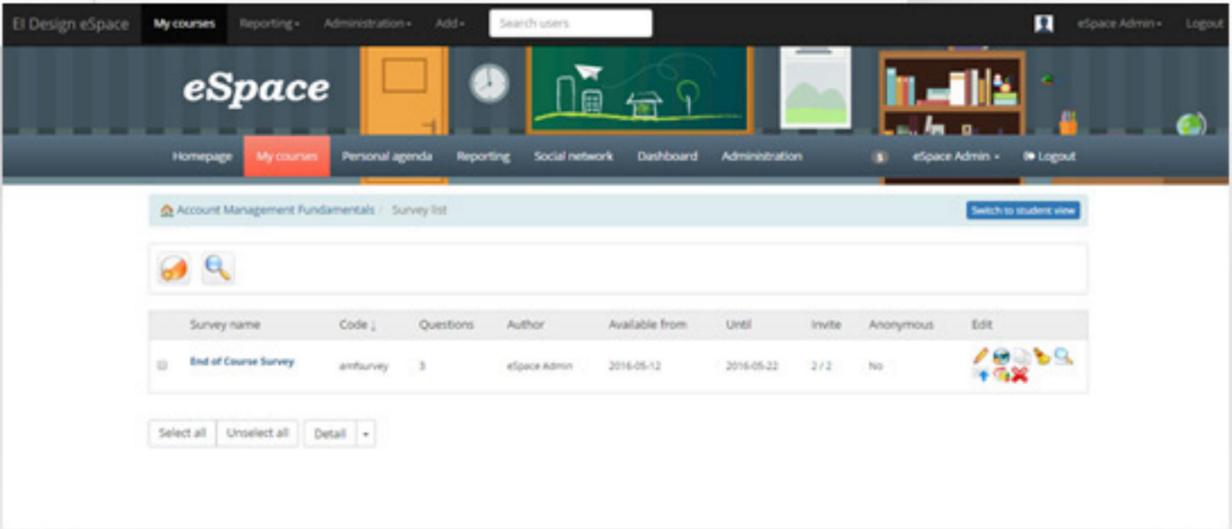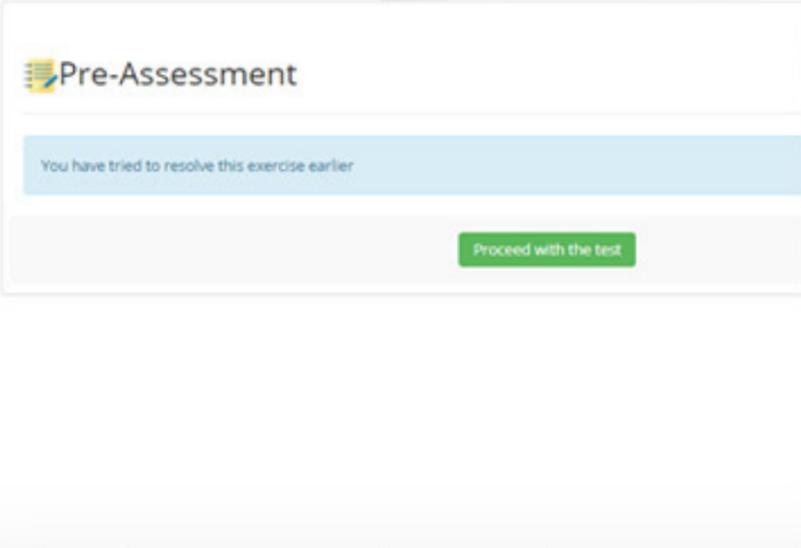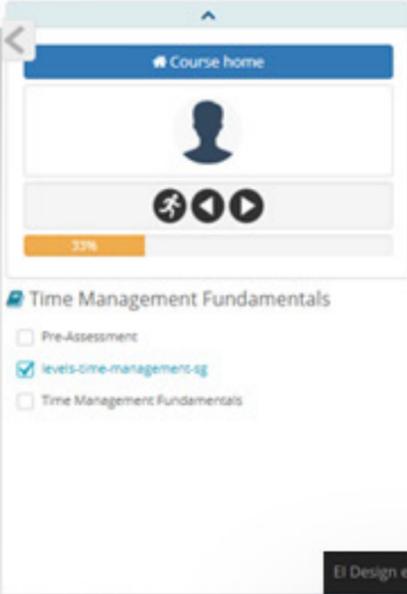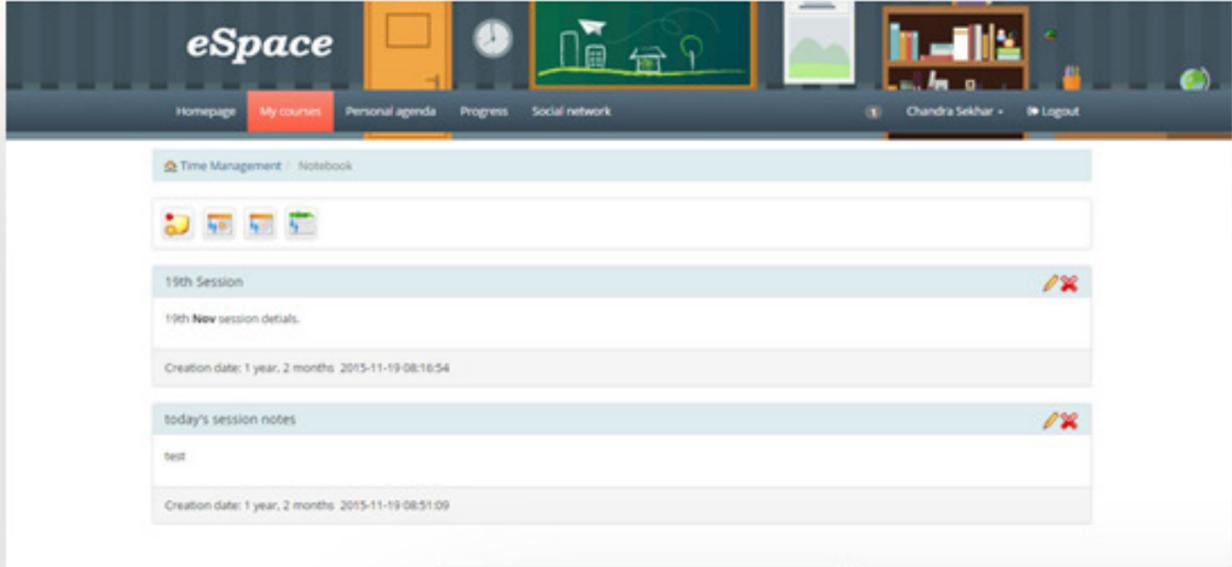
# Example 1

Our platform **eSpace** – a unique online framework for offering ILT and Blended Learning that enables you to go beyond the traditional ILT/blended delivery to a new-age digital experience.

**eSpace** retains the edge of the ILT delivery and offers the benefits and flexibility of online delivery. This unique framework (cloud-based and works on all devices including tablets and smartphones) allows you to offer ILT or Blended Training through an online platform.

You can create learning paths featuring **Microlearning nuggets** (for blended delivery) and integrate **Social Learning** features to provide higher-impact learning.

You can use **eSpace** to:

- **Provide access to a single source for ILT material:** Pre-workshop online material can be shared with learners before the training session. They have an ongoing access to it, during as well as post workshop.

- **Provide control to instructors:** They can define the learning path and integrate all the job aids required for training acquisition and, eventually, its application on the job. This will establish a performance gain that businesses want to see.

- **Communicate and collaborate:** There are several features to facilitate communication with groups and individuals.

- **Engage and contribute:** The tool offers different features to take feedback from participants during the training.

You can take a look at this video to see the features of our **eSpace** platform and how it can be used to enhance the effectiveness of Instructor-Led Training and Blended Learning deliveries.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8SDgo9qPtQ

**Section 5 – Examples on how you can enhance the impact of ILT by adopting a Blended Training approach**

# Example 2

For our own Induction and Onboarding program, we use a Blended Training approach.

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### Part 1 – Online learning path

The essential elements of Induction are available to the learner through the online portal, which supports multiple devices, including smartphones and tablets. The learner goes through a multi-stage learning journey, which features various learning resources in Microlearning format.

### Part 2 – ILT supplement

At each stage of the learning journey, we do an online assessment of the learner's progress as well as provide additional face-to-face, facilitated ILT sessions. The focus of the facilitated sessions is to push knowledge acquisition to application and ensure that the new inductee can begin contributing quickly and effectively.

The online portal features innovative approaches, including:

1. Microlearning
2. Learning paths
3. Social Learning
4. Gamification
5. Millennial-centric designs

# SUMMARY

I hope this eBook gives you a balanced perspective on the approach you can take as you evaluate the transition of your ILT programs into online training modes.

I firmly believe that a middle-of-the-road approach is often a more sensible choice if you are in early stages of eLearning adoption. It is also a better choice where learning gains are directly linked to human intervention.

If you have any queries, please underline contact me.

## Also Read

- How To Convert Instructor-Led Training To eLearning

- Digitize Instructor-Led Training Sessions To Increase Employee Engagement And Performance

- How To Effectively Convert Face-To-Face Instructor-Led Training Into Online Training

- Tips And Best Practices To Create Highly Effective Blended Training Program Design

- 5 Reasons Why You Should Adopt Blended Training

- Video: Checklist for Instructor Led Training (ILT) To Online Learning

# LOOKING TO ADOPT BLENDED TRAINING PROGRAMS IN YOUR LEARNING STRATEGY? EI DESIGN CAN HELP YOU WITH THAT AND MORE!

Our innovative approaches and focus areas include:

- Learning portals with learning paths
- Personalised learning solutions
- Content curation solutions
- Social Learning (collaborative learning)
- Microlearning (for both formal and informal learning)
- Millennial-centric solutions
- Approaches to predict, measure and validate the learnability or learning effectiveness of online courses
- Reporting and analytics

We use the following strategies to create immersive learning:

- Gamification
- Videos and Interactive Videos
- Apps for learning
- Decision making – complex branching simulations
- Scenario-based learning
- Storytorials

We offer a comprehensive services portfolio that includes custom online (eLearning and mLearning) and blended solutions. With a focus on performance gain, we offer a wide range of Performance Support Tools (just-in-time learning/job-aids). We also have a large Localisation practice covering over 26 global languages.

## CONTACT US

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