

eBook

# How L&D Teams Can Lead Learning Culture Transformation and Help Build a Learning Organization

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## About the Author

Asha Pandey is the Founder and Chief Learning Strategist at EI Design. She heads the organization's Solution Architecting and Innovation mandates.

Asha also heads EI Design's **Learning and Performance Consulting practice**. She brings in her experience of nearly 2 decades to help EI Design customers in their digital transformation of learning, training impact measurement, and learning culture transformation.

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

# Foreword



**Christopher Pappas**

Founder of eLearning Industry Inc

Resilience and adaptability are what differentiates thriving organizations from those that struggle to keep up with current developments and market demand. This applies to every aspect of business operations - from employee development to talent recruitment.

However, one of the most crucial factors to consider is the culture that you're cultivating.

The goal isn't to simply equip your team with the skills they need to succeed. You must also set up an ongoing support system and lead by example. Namely, the L&D department can't just develop and deploy content; they need to create holistic eLearning environments that make a lasting impression.

What can you do to foster lifelong learning and enable your team to achieve their full potential? How can you encourage every employee to seize new training opportunities and reflect on personal performance? How do you alter their mindsets and fuel continuous growth among your workforce?

This eBook offers tried-and-tested strategies from the experts at EI Design. Asha Pandey and her team have made it their mission to help organizations of all sizes transform their culture and enact meaningful change.

With their creativity, inspired solutions, and L&D expertise, they're in a unique position to provide valuable and actionable insights. Speaking from personal experience, this is a must-read for everyone who wants to make a shift to online training or optimize their current eLearning approach to meet emerging challenges.

You'll find tips on how to leverage the power of modern technology, eLearning trends, and L&D techniques to bring out the best in your teams and achieve long-term success at an individual and organizational level.

Though it covers all the essentials, this isn't your average "run-of-the-mill" guide that only brushes the surface. It goes beyond the basics and benefits to show you how to forge memorable learning experiences and lay a solid cultural foundation. This eBook also provides tips to weave a continual learning mindset into the fabric of your brand beliefs and company values.

Now is an exciting time to be an L&D professional in charge of paving the path for talent development. It's your chance to be trendsetters and trailblazers, always thinking of new and innovative ways to bring engagement to the next level.

Read on to discover why leading the cultural transformation change should be a top priority for leaders and how to build an effective lifelong learning framework from the ground up.

# Preface

2020 was a challenging year and one of disruption for the L&D teams.

However, they responded quickly and effectively to help their organizations manage the changing workplace dynamics (as the pendulum swung from a 100% remote working to the likely hybrid model now). As the workplace dynamics evolved, they met the challenge of quickly remodeling the way training is developed and delivered by moving from face-to-face training to the online or Blended mode.

This journey of accelerated Digital Transformation brought in new challenges from remote learners – from lack of engagement to learning fatigue. It also brought in a new set of “asks” from them – including more autonomy on how they want to learn, the ability to pull resources on demand, learning in the flow of work, and room for Social and Self-Directed Learning. Alongside, there was a steady push from business on accelerated reskilling, upskilling, and facilitating internal mobility.

However, I see this disruption as a great opportunity for L&D teams to bring in long-term changes - My eBook outlines how L&D teams can capitalize on this disruption and lead to bringing in a learning culture transformation and building a learning organization.

**Read on!**

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# Section

## How Can L&D Teams Drive Continuous Learning and Help Build a Learning Organization





# Introduction

Continuous learning benefits both employers and employees. Employees develop skills to remain relevant, prepare for the future, and are more engaged. Employers gain a competitive advantage through incremental and disruptive innovations.

In this section, I outline how to make a business case for continuous learning - including strategies to show the value and impact of continuous learning.





## Why is continuous learning a necessity for employers and employees?

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The workplace is in constant flux, especially but not solely limited to knowledge work. Continuous learning and development facilitates the ongoing development of skills and capabilities, enabling employees and employers to keep up with, and perhaps even lead, the changing workplace.

## What do employees gain from continuous learning?

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Employees benefit from continuous learning and development as they keep their skills sharp, develop new skills, and prepare for their next role. Learning engages employee creativity, sparking innovation in processes and products. Mastery of a skill is one of the three pillars to engaged employees (the other two are autonomy and purpose).

Employees often cite learning and development opportunities offered by a company as one of the most important factors when considering a job offer. Many employees are not happy with the opportunities available in their current employment.

## What do employers gain from continuous learning?

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Employers benefit from continuous learning and development as they build a highly skilled, engaged, and productive workforce. Sometimes, business leaders lose sight of the direct correlation those factors have on the bottom line.

Upskilling and reskilling employees helps employers stay ahead of their competition. Upstart firms often develop strategies, technologies, and products that upset the market, but companies who continuously develop their employees see those new strategies, technologies, and products before their competition. Innovation thrives in an environment of learning.

Employees are more engaged when learning continuously. Happier employees are more dedicated to the mission and strategy of a company, removing much of the pressure for recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new employees. As tenure increases, teams can form more cohesive units, working efficiently and effectively.

Companies can build leadership skills, ensuring that their management and executive teams can quickly backfill vacated roles. Strong individual and team leadership is difficult to recruit. Developing that within a company ensures long-lasting competitive advantages for employers.



## Making a Business Case for Continuous Learning

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When making a business case of continuous learning and development, call out the following factors:

1. Continuous learning helps **create agility** within organizations. Organizations can quickly react to changing market needs or, more importantly, can create those changes in the market.
2. As employees learn to learn, they become more **agile** themselves. They become better at seeing the big picture, thinking strategically, and then executing tactical plans. They can evaluate progress on the fly and make changes when needed.

3. An organization that fosters a culture of continuous learning is prepared to meet the future and **thrive in the unknown**.
  4. Continuous learning **fuels innovation** – incremental, sustaining, and disruptive innovations.
  5. Formal **training becomes more effective** as informal training opportunities are used to plant seeds, provide support during the training, reinforce important principles, and serve as performance support after the training.
  6. Often, Self-Directed Learning is more **applicable to obtaining skills in the flow of work**, enhancing employee effectiveness.
  7. Continuous learning creates a **common culture within organizations**. Often, employees begin even using a shared vocabulary as a shorthand to reinforce new ideas and work through difficult problems.
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# Making a Business Case for Continuous Learning and Development – Impact on the Bottom Line

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Identify the following factors as impacts to the bottom line when creating a business case for continuous learning:

1. A culture of learning **reduces time to proficiency**. Employees are effective in less time, reducing the drain on training resources and increasing productivity.
2. **In the flow of work** performance improves in a culture of continuous learning.
3. Formal training **costs are reduced** in an environment where continuous learning is encouraged. Employees seek out knowledge on their own, often coaching and mentoring each other.
4. Employees can spend less time in training classes, **reducing seat time**, and maximizing their time at work.
5. **Employees become more accountable** for their own learning and should demonstrate what they've done with what they've learned. Innovations such as Gmail came from the time Google employees spent developing their skills and evaluating what needed to be done outside their normal project work.



## Conclusion

Continuous learning is important for employers and employees. The disruption provides a great opportunity to drive in a change in learning culture and create a learning organization. As you would have noted, organizations gain a significant competitive advantage through fostering a culture of continuous learning and development. Employees sharpen their skills, remain relevant and move ahead in their industry, as well as become more engaged.

## Section

# 2

## What Strategies Can Help L&D Teams Create Great Learner and Learning Experiences







# Introduction

To achieve the mandate of continuous learning, the employees must see value in the trainings and for this, they expect to be provided great learner experience as well as exceptional learning experiences.

L&D professionals sometimes misunderstand the subtleties of learner and learning experiences. In this section, I outline what each aspect signifies, what are the differences, and share strategies using both to create effective learning programs.

## What is the learner experience?

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The world has seen an expansion to virtual working and learning. If you ask typical eLearners what their “experience” has been with a course, they’ll likely talk about what they learned and how much they liked (or disliked!) what was taught. This feedback is a binary way of expressing their experiences.

Their likes or dislikes about certain aspects of learning are only part of - but not the entirety of a learner’s experience.

In fact, learners’ experiences encompass more than just what they learned. It entails everything related to the act of learning – from where, how, and when they interacted with the learning environment to how the curriculum is structured and methods used to present the subject.

- In that sense, learner experience refers to everything a learner encountered along her/his personal learning pathway.
- It includes the fun (or stress) she/he may have experienced through her/his learning journey.
- It factors the social interactions associated with learning.
- And it takes into account the interactivity aspects along that journey.

## What is the learning experience?

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Like an eLearner's overall experience during learning, learner experience does not describe a binary encounter between the learner and her/his Learning Management System (LMS).

- It is a much broader term and defines multiple facets of experiences between learners and their learning environment.
- It encompasses every interaction a learner has with the program or course he/she attends, and the experiences generated along that pathway.

To provide a good learning experience, learners should progressively go through multiple stages of their learning journey.

- That path typically commences with awareness building and consciousness of the need for learning.
- A learner flows seamlessly through a stage of successfully consuming appropriate learning content to meet her/his learning needs.
- But the purview of the learning experience doesn't end there. It expands into the domain of successful application of skills learned to the job and culminates with demonstrable on-the-job behavioral change.

## Why are both learner experience and learning experience key for creating effective learning and development programs?

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The key to providing employees with a long, successful, and rewarding career at the company lies in offering them continuous learning opportunities through a memorable learner experience.

With so many from the workforce working and learning remotely today, learning dynamics have changed. The usual adage of “Build it and they will learn” just doesn’t cut it anymore!

L&D teams must therefore take a holistic, learner-centric approach when creating those opportunities. To do that, both learner experience and learning experience are key components for building effective and immersive learning and development programs. Focusing on only one of these aspects risks producing learning solutions that do not provide learners with both memorable learning and performance improvements.

# What strategies can help you create great learner experiences?

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The following strategies can help deliver exceptional learner experiences:

1. **Anytime, anywhere learning:** To deliver good experiences to your learners, it's important to not make the timeframes around learning rigid. This is especially essential in today's work-from-home environment, where employees often work on personal time and request managerial flexibility to attend to personal commitments during traditionally working hours. Allowing eLearners to consume content anytime, anywhere helps provide a better learner experience.



2. **Available on demand:** Learning “convenience” is another aspect of the entire experience that learners crave for. Learning at the point of need, learning in support of a specific performance objective, and learning just in time to deal with a work challenge all go to building an exceptional learner experience.
  3. **Learner centricity and personalization:** A good learner experience doesn’t happen through a one-size-fits-all approach. Cookie-cutters just won’t cut it! The learning program must cater to unique learner requirements and needs and must entail personalization to support those needs.
  4. **The “learning pathways” must map to the “career pathways”:** Career pathways are planned keeping in mind the employees’ future progression through various organizational roles. And, to support that progression, employees will likely require learning support. That support will come from learning pathways. Both pathways must map to each other to create an exceptional learner experience.
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## What strategies can help you create great learning experiences?

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The following strategies can help deliver exceptional learning experiences:

1. **Immersive and engaging strategies:** Connecting learners with real-world experiences, using Story Based Scenarios, Gamification and Game-based Learning, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR) – all help in producing a great learning experience.



2. **Experiential learning:** Designing active learning programs, where learners proactively participate in the learning process – as opposed to listening and understanding – helps build a good learning experience. Learning simulations, interactive assignments, and situational learning help learning by doing and through reflection.
3. **Available within their workflow and should help them perform better:** Integrating learning within a learner's workflow is a great way to deliver a positive learning experience. Rather than waiting for scheduled courses, or scheduling learning opportunities based on an instructor's availability, use point-of-need learning and offer learning with Performance Support Tools.
4. **Social and Collaborative Learning:** With employees spending a lot of time on social platforms, including with peers, colleagues, and co-workers, it makes sense to deliver a compelling learning experience by integrating Social Learning. Designing Social Learning activities, where learners must cooperate and collaborate, also helps produce engaging experiences for eLearners.
5. **SDL and continuous learning:** Self-Directed Learning (SDL), as opposed to mandated or forced learning, often makes learners more receptive to learning. In addition, offering learners opportunities to further their learning throughout their careers – e.g., mapping career paths with learning paths – ensures a performance-enhancing, rewarding learning experience.



## Conclusion

At first glance, learner experience and learning experience seem to indicate the same thing. However, to seasoned L&D professionals, they're not. In some ways, the two terms could be used interchangeably, though they have subtle differences. In that respect, they're different sides of the same coin – but the underlined point is “different.”

With so many people working and learning remotely today, it's helpful for training teams to understand those differences when designing impactful and immersive learning content.

Understanding what learner and learning experiences mean, and why they are both important, can go a long way in creating effective learning programs that foster continuous learning.

## Section

# 3

### What Immersive Learning Strategies Can Help L&D Teams Foster Learner Engagement





# Introduction

The current work from home (WFH) dynamics is one replete with distractions that erode learner focus during Virtual Training. To sustain the focus on continuous learning, this challenge must be fixed. In this section, I outline how L&D teams can use immersive learning to address the challenge of learner engagement.



## The Learner Engagement Challenge

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Changes in workplace dynamics, where more employees work from places other than their traditional workplaces, has produced wide-ranging anxiety and distractions in the workforce. Delivering Virtual Training in such an environment is extremely challenging because it's difficult to keep remote learners focused and engaged.

The result? Increasing rates of disengagement from Virtual Training, declining rates of program completion, and a general lack of optimizing the use of corporate training resources.

Providing remote learners with a set of immersive learning experiences can help address these challenges.

## What is immersive learning?

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Traditional learning approaches relied on media such as audio, print, and video to deliver impactful learning experiences. While these approaches can drive limited learner engagement, newer approaches use other senses such as sound, vision, and touch to deliver deeper immersive learning experiences that foster greater engagement with the learning process.

Immersive learning is an approach to deliver virtual learning experiences that go beyond traditional passive learning, where trainers deliver and learners listen, view, and take notes.

Immersive training seeks to have virtual learners engage more deeply in the learning process. They do so by collaborating, practicing, doing, and experimenting in their immersive environments.



## How does immersive learning support the learning process?

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The virtual learning process is one where knowledge is delivered in a virtual setting, on the one hand, and is received remotely, on the other hand.

Learner engagement is key to successful assimilation (and subsequent application) of new knowledge. The immersive learning approaches support this process in two ways:

- Firstly, a virtual immersive learning experience delivers knowledge in ways that captivate and engage remote learners, unlike other Instructor-Led Training (ILT) or Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) approaches.
- Secondly, and more importantly, immersive training allows remote learners to practice what they've learned – problem solving, decision making, critical thinking – in a safe virtual environment.

The effect on remote learners, of collaborating with trainers, fellow learners, and workplace peers, albeit virtually, immerses participants in training programs and further drives learner engagement.





## How can you create an immersive learning experience?

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L&D teams can use a wide array of strategies, approaches, and tools to provide a virtual learner with a highly immersive learning experience. These may include the use of real-life Scenarios, Branching Simulations, Interactive Storytelling, and Gamification. Other immersive training strategies, such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Mobile Apps, and Video-based Performance Support Tools, can equally help learners immerse themselves in their training world.

## How does creating an immersive learning experience help you combat the learner engagement challenge?

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Monotony breeds disengagement. In today's remote working/learning world, it's very easy for "bored" learners to disengage. The challenge for L&D teams is - How do you foster learner engagement, while at the same time also deliver a fun, successful training program?

The answer lies in using training approaches, such as immersive training, to appeal to learners on multiple fronts – **logical** (logos), **ethical** (ethos), and **emotional** (pathos).

Trainers may use a variety of supporting tools and practices, such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), moderated discussions, simulated use cases, and branching-based practice assignments to deliver an immersive learning experience.

A training program based on immersive appeal drives participant eagerness to learn, thereby fostering learner engagement. Learners who get involved in the learning process, by being active participants instead of passive listeners (and dormant content consumers!) are far more engaged learners. They absorb more, and they transfer what they've learned to the workplace far more effectively than passive learners.

# What are the key considerations for creating immersive learning experiences?

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To foster learner engagement, L&D teams must consider the following:

1. **Create meaningful immersive use cases:** Virtual learners engage more eagerly when they can relate to the use cases. Make your story, use cases, and scenarios as close to real life as possible.
2. **Incorporate frequent learner engagement points:** Creating an immersive learning experience requires more than just substituting text-based notes for videos or VR content. To deliver a truly immersive training experience, where possible, inject interactivity, feedback, experimentation, and opportunities for collaboration into the learning program.
3. **Build compelling learner experiences through technology:** Simply porting existing training to a virtual environment won't compel learners to immerse themselves into the training program and engage with the content. L&D teams must learn to use technology, such as VR, AI, AR, combined with supporting strategies (more on this topic later), such as Gamification, Branching Simulations, and Scenario Based Learning, to deliver an immersive learning experience that breeds engagement.



## What immersive training strategies can help you create an immersive learning experience?

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With other distractions and preoccupations to contend with, virtual learners more easily disengage from their learning programs. Here are some immersive training strategies to help you deal with the learner engagement challenge:

1. **Gamification:** By introducing fun and competition – combined with rewards and recognition – along the learning journey, Gamification offers a compelling immersive training experience that captivates learners to engage.

2. **Story Based Learning:** Stories appeal to remote learners at a higher emotional level than traditional learning approaches do. They, therefore, produce better learner engagement and result in higher retention and recall of training content.
3. **Branching Simulations:** One compelling aim, of virtual immersive training, is to help learners engage with the program by teaching them the consequences of their actions and decisions. Branching Simulations are a great strategy to accomplish that objective.
4. **AR/VR/ER/MR:** Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Extended Reality (ER), and Mixed Reality (MR) deliver near-real-world experiences to virtual learners. From the comforts of their homes, cars, or other safe settings, they immerse themselves remotely into digital experiences to learn new skills, hone old ones, and reinforce new behavior. This encourages remote learners to engage more readily with the training program.

5. **Next Gen strategies:** L&D teams may also use a variety of Next Gen strategies to foster greater learner engagement, including App-based learning, Microlearning, mLearning, and Predictive Learning (based on AI).
  6. **Video Based Learning:** In addition to creating an environment where remote learners immerse themselves in learning, Video Based Learning delivers sticky learning opportunities, offers performance support on the job, and provides immersive training options to engage learners through learning on-the-go.
  7. **Scenario Based Learning:** By encouraging learners to engage with the scenarios presented, this strategy not only fosters learner behavior change, but it also contributes to long-term performance improvements as well.
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## Conclusion

A well-designed immersive learning experience goes a long way to fuel learner interest in Virtual Training. It also helps learners stay engaged for longer, thereby assuring better program completion rates. Additionally, improved learner engagement also leads to better knowledge absorption, longer retention, more efficient behavior modification, and all-round workplace performance improvements.



## Section

How Can L&D Teams Build a Growth Mindset and Create a Culture of Lifelong Learning





# Introduction

Mindset is foundational to the success or failure of any organization and a learning mindset is vital in creating a learning culture and sustaining the continuous learning mandate. In this section, I explain why building a growth mindset is an important initiative for L&D teams and outlines strategies that will help create a learning mindset in employees.

## Why is a growth mindset so important?

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The nature of work, team dynamics, leadership and management, as well as collaboration changed considerably in 2020.

According to LinkedIn's 2021 Workplace Learning Report, the biggest area of focus for L&D teams is upskilling and reskilling employees. The success of organizations in 2021 will depend on their ability to prepare their employees for the new normal and future states of work. This is certainly a tall order.

A growth mindset is a vital precursor for any upskilling or reskilling program. Building and promoting a growth mindset is an important focus area for L&D organizations.

Ironically, the education and L&D fields tend to be slow to change and innovation. For example, even during the pandemic, many L&D organizations tried to convert traditional face-to-face training into the VILT setting without changing anything other than the modality, despite feedback from learners.



## How can L&D teams leverage a design thinking approach to problem solving?

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Design thinking is an approach to problem solving that emphasizes the power of ideation and iteration. L&D teams in 2021 need to leverage more courage to take calculated risks. To mitigate the negative consequences of failed risks, L&D teams should make iterations quickly and efficiently.

This is only possible if the team is made up of individuals who possess a learning mindset, one in which they look for and recognize failures, take responsibility, and learn from them.

A growth mindset builds antifragility within organizations. While it's impossible to predict the future, employees with a learning mindset iterate quicker, efficiently reacting to new markets and creative competitors.

## How does the growth mindset help position L&D in long-term elevated positions within organizations?

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With a growth mindset, L&D teams are viewed as problem solvers in an organization. For example, when calls to the support team increase, executives at many organizations first turn to the L&D teams to collaborate, using data to identify the best solutions. Additionally, some of the new roles and responsibilities of the L&D teams include the following:

1. L&D is in the driver's seat as change makers. L&D teams can now work to drive the way organizations work.
2. From a growth mindset point of view, L&D teams leverage corporate strategy and tactics as opportunities to solve problems.
3. As cited by the LinkedIn Learning 2021 Report, upskilling and reskilling are a top priority for L&D teams. This means that L&D teams will lead the way by preparing employees with the skills required to be successful in the future.
4. Talent strategy, once lost in the Human Resource function, is now a c-suite initiative. Most organizations now view L&D as a necessity in this effort to develop a learning mindset amongst employees.
5. Modeling a learning mindset and correct behavior, L&D teams should invest in themselves by skilling up for an increased emphasis on learning and development in the future.

## Understanding the Two Types of Mindsets - The Tyranny of Now vs the Power of Yet

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A fixed mindset (antithetical to a learning mindset) traps companies and employees in a perspective that all problems should be solved with the same solution, despite the differences - Too often, those problems cannot be solved by former practices and companies grow more and more impatient for immediate results – the tyranny of now (as termed by Carol Dweck).

In contrast, a growth mindset helps companies and employees see their progress. They can look back and learn from previous mistakes - Employees remain engaged, understanding that goals and tactics in the present are achievable. Employees with a learning mindset understand that while they may not understand immediately how to solve problems, they can iterate, experiment, and learn from mistakes in their journey toward success. This moves the company past seemingly insurmountable blocks while keeping employees engaged.



## What is the mindset of a lifelong learner?

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Lifelong learners embrace the power of yet and employ a growth mindset. They understand that solutions can be found through iteration and experimentation. **Many in the younger generations, like Gen X and Gen Z, are more open to a learning mindset** and look for established learning programs as vital elements to organizations for which they'd like to work.

Additionally, a learning mindset leads to teams with **higher levels of cooperation and stronger norms for problem solving, creativity, and collaborative innovation.**





## What must L&D teams do to build a growth mindset?

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There are several steps L&D teams should take to build both a growth and learning mindset in themselves and in their learner populations.

1. It's important to **measure the change and impact** to corporate growth and strategic success vs just smile sheets post training. This helps to foster a learning mindset among even the most entrenched employees.



2. Leveraging the burgeoning influence L&D teams have, they **can push organizational alignment toward a learning culture** where employees have the resources and time required for learning and experimentation. Developing a learning mindset like this is only possible if employees are also granted time for discovery and professional development outside of formal training situations.
3. While L&D teams can design and develop formal upskilling and reskilling opportunities, organizations **that foster an environment of extreme ownership** at the individual level will enjoy the benefits of a growth mindset. Employees will take responsibility for their own growth, tracking movements and developments within their industry to identify learning options to remain relevant and competitive.
4. At the same time, L&D teams can **develop and promote employee learning habits and continuous learning and experimentation**. They can design learning solutions that nudge and reinforce learning behavior and growth mindset. They can also create connected learning solutions that support formal training with informal learning, allow employees to curate and share content on social platforms, and seek out coaching and mentoring relationships.
5. Finally, to develop a learning mindset, **L&D teams can build and integrate learning into the flow of work**. People typically forget 80% of what they learned within 30 days if they don't apply that new knowledge or skill. Learning is about the journey, not the destination. By supporting and rewarding learning and experimentation, organizations can foster a healthy growth mindset.

## Why should continuous learning and development be a c-suite priority?

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Organizations comprising lifelong learners adapt faster to dynamic exigencies and innovate solutions for previously unrecognized markets. This section explains why learning must be an enterprise priority and outlines ways to build lifelong learners.

From both the employer and the employee perspective, there are a number of reasons that c-suite should make L&D an ongoing priority.

- For established firms, the ability to learn and adapt to change is at the core of success in business. Otherwise, upstart firms will identify and service formerly unrecognized needs and markets and replace incumbent firms.
- Workforce development is critical to maximize the value and impact of organizational change management efforts. COVID-19 is an example of a black swan event - Black swan events cannot be predicted but still happen. Storms, stumbling economies, social upheaval, earthquakes, pandemics – all are black swan events that are impossible to predict but still happen and upend business as usual. Those who are lifelong learners are more able to quickly recognize changing situations and adapt, experiment, and find success not despite, but because of unforeseen events.

- Lifelong learners tend to be more engaged employees. It's certainly clear that organizations who emphasize learning as an expected and natural part of the job enjoy higher employee engagement.
- Rich employee development and corporate training is quickly becoming a key differentiator between companies competing for talent. Potential employees want to work for companies that value lifelong learning. Employees report higher satisfaction and workplace happiness when working at organizations with a healthy learning environment.
- In the past, organizations have tried to buy or hire high performers. But the expense of hiring, firing, and recruiting is unsustainable, not to mention the unhealthy culture that develops among employees.

**From the employee perspective**, it's clear that individuals desire and need to continue learning new skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

Employees seek out employers who foster a healthy learning environment and support them in their learning efforts.

Employees should ask themselves if they'll be ready when their opportunity arrives to shine. If they work for an organization that encourages, empowers, and rewards lifelong learners, they'll easily be able to answer "yes" to that question.

While university and college degrees have merit, lifelong learning is essential to an individual's professional success and survival. The world continues to change, and learning is the only antidote to quickly evolving economic and technological disruptions.



## How do you establish a culture of lifelong learning in your organization?

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Leaders need to listen to how employees talk about learning and time spent in learning activities. Employees talk about how they applied concepts from learning programs, failed, iterated, and tried again. If leaders don't observe employees talking about what they've learned and tried, or if they hear employees using terms like "I don't have time for that training," they should be concerned that they have a cultural problem.

To create a culture of lifelong learning, leaders should:

1. Make learning an **organizational priority** - Enterprise strategy and goals should include tactics that emphasize and require learning.
2. Demonstrate the **value of learning** to employees - By recognizing and rewarding those who take advantage of and apply what they learn through training and learning opportunities.
3. Provide **formal and informal options** for employees to learn and grow.
4. Create **frictionless learning opportunities**, many of which occur in the flow of work.
5. Invest more formal L&D efforts toward **teaching people how to learn**. Most employees are used to being spoon-fed information they need for upskilling and top-down process modifications. But employees drive, own their learning, and understand what options for lifelong learning are available and how to leverage them most effectively.
6. Based on organizational skills and future market needs, create **learning paths** to help people move closer to their short- and long-term professional aspirations.
7. **Model learning behaviors** and capitalize the development of learning processes and tools.

## How do you build an army of lifelong learners?

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Of the many requirements that make up the promotion process in the US Marines, a required reading list is often highlighted by those inside and those outside the Marines. Jim Mattis, the former leader of the US Marines said that “If you haven’t read hundreds of books, you are functionally illiterate, and you will be incompetent, because your personal experiences alone aren’t broad enough to sustain you.” This instills in Marines the invaluable attribute of lifelong learning. In addition to the inherent value of reading, organizations can leverage the following practices to build an army of lifelong learners:

1. **The future of learning is not in the classroom.** It’s in discovering ways to do better while doing the work. Organizations need to provide opportunities to **learn in the flow of work.**



2. Provide **Microlearning** options for frequent nudges that build learning habits.
3. Reward those who have a **bias for action and take calculated risks**, learn from their mistakes, and celebrate failure.
4. Leaders need to **model desired behavior** – learn, share what they learned, and visibly participate with others in learning.
5. **Reward learning** – highlight those who complete formal and less-formal training and education programs.
6. Build a **culture where learning is the default state** – not something that requires professional sacrifices.
7. Promote **informal learning** – including Self-Directed and Social Learning.
8. Make **learning interesting** and create awareness around training and learning options.
9. **Change the behavior of the L&D teams** to that of the guide on the side.



## Conclusion

Organizations thrive when employees obtain and utilize a growth mindset. It's an important initiative for L&D teams to develop a learning mindset among employees and with organizations.

With this, they can create lifelong learners who adapt faster to dynamic situations and evolving business needs. They're more capable of incremental and disruptive innovations. Organizations that build lifelong learners are more successful, profitable, and anti-fragile in the face of today's volatile business environment.



## Section

How Can L&D Teams Create a  
Connected Learning Solution by  
Leveraging Informal Learning to  
Support Formal Training





# Introduction

Learning in any organization is the base on which creativity, innovation, and strong execution is built. In this section, I explain how organizational L&D teams can use informal learning to reinforce, augment, and support formal training solutions. This will help them reach their goal of creating a learning organization that thrives on continuous learning.

## The Modern Learning Challenge

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Often, L&D teams are focused on delivering and creating great training. Most of the training budget is spent on formal training. However, employees are learning perpetually, regardless.

People have learned informally for millennia and to great effect. This involves communicating with SMEs – observing, listening, and enquiring. Employees usually don't turn to formal training residing on LMSs on a consistent basis. As a result, the gap between how employees learn and what L&D teams deliver continues to widen. As younger generations move into and throughout the workforce, traditional learning strategies will no longer be effective.

**Therefore, L&D teams need to refocus their efforts to match the value informal and formal learning modalities offer to employees.**

What is informal learning? Informal learning is impromptu/spontaneous learning or learning 'on the fly.' It is an extension of the way all of us have been learning informally since childhood. It is self-directed and self-motivated and is usually done in situ. It supports performance when it's needed.

# Why should you invest in both formal training and informal learning?

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There are several specific reasons for organizations to invest in informal learning that supports and augments formal training programs.

The common refrain in the L&D world – that up to 70% of learning occurs informally in most organizations – is accurate and supported by research. That is based on research and indicates that the success of an organization depends on the quality of the informal learning taken.

Informal learning is all around us – across all employees. So, it makes sense for L&D teams to leverage it to create a healthy learning ecosystem and corporate culture.

Because it's clear that informal learning happens, regardless of efforts to support, ignore, or control it by L&D teams, organizations can build goals around informal learning and seek to create a learning ecosystem that facilitates informal learning.

In fact, informal learning is the fundamental way in which employees develop competency in their job roles and develop additional skills and abilities. Informal learning is everywhere. Informal learning is more accurately described as learning that exists on a continuum - one side represents more formal learning and the other more informal.



## What is formal training and informal learning good for?

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**Formal training** is important because it drives learning initiatives within organizations.

Formal training:

- **Adds structure** to training programs and provides direction to employees.
- Is **goal-oriented** and targeted at specific objectives. It can be aligned to support specific enterprise goals and objectives.

- Is often **facilitated by subject matter experts** with specific knowledge related to the process, topic, or situation.
- Is **easier to assess**. Tracking programs are more robust for formal training programs.

**Informal learning**, comprising 70% of all learning within an organization, is vital for enterprise and individual success.

Informal learning:

- In the same way that the French composer Claude Debussy described, “music is the space between the notes,” the **space between formal training is where true learning happens**. That space can be empty and left up to chance or L&D teams can seek to fill it with thoughtful nudges, opportunities for practice and feedback, and a series of behavior-changing micro-experiences. It’s the small, everyday experiences that truly change behavior, not grand, infrequent formal training events.
- Is self-directed, therefore **employees learn more effectively**.
- Is **where the vast majority of the learning happens**.
- Is a space **where employees leverage creativity, collaboration, and innovation**.

## How do you create a connected learning solution by supporting formal training with informal learning?

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The concept of a learning culture based on a Learning and Performance Ecosystem meshed approach to blended formal training with informal learning opportunities is vital for an effective integration of modalities. To do this, L&D teams need to redefine the role of formal training, using it to add structure to informal learning and give employees a sense of direction and help them achieve baseline proficiency.

A large proportion of formal training needs to switch to help employees understand:

- **How to learn** - Many employees, especially those who depend on others to tell them what to learn and when to do it, may have either forgotten or never learned the art of learning.
- **How to cut through noise** - Between daily stand-up meetings, emails from the HR, IT problems, and completing their basic job responsibilities, employees must maximize what time they have for learning instead of being distracted by vacuous emails, social media, and other interruptions.
- **How to eliminate distractions** - By focusing on learning that will guide them in their career and job role.
- **How to focus on actual results** - Learned and adopted behaviors, experiments and iterations, and improved cross-silo relationships.

It also affirms the following:

- A bias for action, clear headed iteration, learning, and honest evaluation and feedback is more valuable than heads-down checklists and safe inaction.
- The value of celebrating the learning process, appreciating failed experiments as learning opportunities.

As organizations foster a learning culture, employees will have the courage and ability to seek continuous improvement on the job. That will enable them to use informal learning for practice, collaboration, and learning on the job, moving toward mastery.

Informal learning is a way for L&D teams to attain the holy grail of learning - content personalized to the individual. L&D teams can give direction, recommendations, and access to content and a space for employees to curate and share their own content and experiences. This can then be used in the future by L&D teams for even more focused and efficient formal training and learning paths.



It's also important for L&D teams to strike a balance, incorporating informal learning strategies to support formal training, by:

- Investing in informal **learning platforms**.
- **Supporting** Self-Directed Learning, Social Learning, Curation, and learning in the flow of work.
- **Mapping informal learning efforts** to formal training objectives.
- Create **extended learning solutions** that don't focus on a moment in time, but instead include ongoing practice, evaluation, and follow-up opportunities.

## How do you evaluate informal learning?

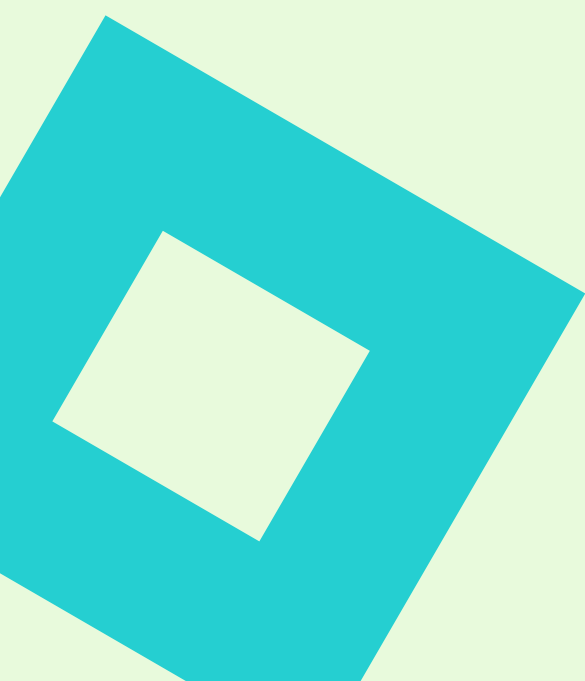
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Informal learning has a 75% chance of changing behavior, encouraging employees to adopt new behaviors, versus the 5% - 20% efficacy rate of more formal training solutions. This is a different take on the 70/20/10 rule considered by many L&D professionals.

While sometimes difficult, the following are examples of readily available and objectively measurable indicators of the effectiveness of a company's culture of informal learning:

- **Survey employees** and ask questions such as:
  - How have you enhanced your knowledge and skills required for your job in the past year?
  - What did you learn?
  - What form of media did you apply?
  - How many hours did you dedicate to these activities in the last one month?
- Assess the number of **silo-crossing collaborations** in the organization.

- Identify the **quality and speed of product and service innovations**.
  - Evaluate the amount of **information sharing** and curated content within a social learning platform.
  - Evaluate **employee engagement** – higher engagement implies more learning.
  - Collect **thoughtful feedback** directed at formal training.
  - Identify **employee produced content** and SME recognition.
- 





## Conclusion

Creativity, innovation, and effective tactical execution starts with a healthy culture of learning. I hope this section provided the requisite insights on how you can leverage informal learning to augment, support, and bolster formal training and create holistic training programs to facilitate organizational success.

# 6

## Section

# How Can L&D Teams Convert Event-based Training to an Ecosystem of Continuous Learning





# Introduction

Traditional training with a focus on largely discrete and disparate events lacks the effectiveness required for true behavior change and it cannot create a culture of learning. In this section, I outline how a continuous learning process can be brought in an organization and how this will improve the application of learning and lead to behavior change.

## Why should you shift from discrete and disparate training events to continuous learning?

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In traditional training, learners attend training sessions – either synchronous or asynchronous – sometimes with groups of peers or on their own. The events take place outside the work environment and lack the opportunity for application and don't lead to true behavior change.

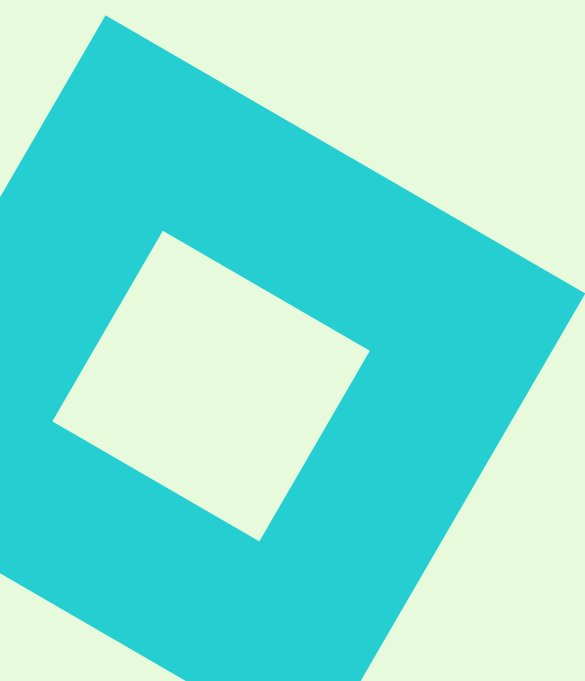
Traditional training events are still important and can serve as impact events from which to measure strategic informational and motivational guides. But recognizing the limitations of those events is important so that interspersed between them are opportunities for employees to digest and apply new information.

Continuous learning programs fill the gaps between traditional training events by giving learners time to think, act, and evaluate.

Hence, a more effective model is one in which learning is a **continuous process** for employees.

- This model recognizes that learning is a journey that occurs over time and through opportunities for application, evaluation, and conscious iteration.

- Additionally, learners need the time, opportunity, and space to evaluate new knowledge and determine the best way it applies to their situation.
  - Consider a leadership training program, one in which the company CEO may discuss a corporate value such as innovation.
    - The CEO can explain the importance of innovation and how she sees it working in the organization.
    - After that discrete event, a continuous learning program that includes nudges to articles, discussions, and shared experiences can turn a one-hour session about innovation to something that truly changes the behavior and culture of an organization.
- 







## What are the key considerations to successfully shift to a continuous learning process?

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Consider the following factors when shifting the learning in your organization from individual events to a cycle of continuous learning process:

1. **Attitude is powerful:** Helping employees, especially those in management, understand the value of a continuous learning process and their role in it will shift behaviors and habits.

2. **Work with a bigger picture:** In her book “Mindset,” Carol Dweck explains “the power of yet versus the tyranny of now.” When employees understand that learning is a journey, they can look forward to an end goal that may take time and effort to pursue. The alternative is a situation in which employees and managers become increasingly frustrated with disconnected training events, immediately after which change is impossible to measure.
3. **Each failure is an opportunity to learn, and learning doesn’t occur without failure:** Employees need time to experiment with what they’ve learned. It’s vital that they receive feedback and coaching so they can improve as they experiment.
4. **Frictionless learning:** Performance support materials need to be accessible anytime and virtually anywhere. The ease of access to information in the flow of work is the deciding factor on whether employees will search for and apply new knowledge. If information is buried behind thick access portals, deep within long documents or somewhere in long videos, they’ll not have the time or patience to find or use it.
5. **Social and Collaborative Learning:** This makes it possible for employees to improve on new concepts and how they apply them on the job.

# What strategies can help you in converting event-based training to an ecosystem of continuous learning?

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There are several strategies to consider when converting event-based training programs to continuous learning:

1. **Leaders must first model desired behavior.** Those in the c-suite should use the training resources available and share what they learn, admitting to failures and explaining how they overcame them.
2. **Map learning programs to learning journeys.** Be aware that a learning journey needs to start with awareness, motivation, participation, and experimentation.
3. **Digitize learning** content to Performance Support Tools so that it's easy to find in the flow of work.
4. **Use Social Learning** so that employees can collaborate with others in their situation. Within those cohorts, employees can share knowledge and even generate additional content.
5. **Promote Self-Directed Learning.** This is advantageous because employees can find the meaning and mastery of their content domains. To do this, corporate training teams can provide:
  - **Resources**, such as access to LinkedIn Learning, Harvard Business Review, or more trade-specific journals and learning organizations.

- **Direction** on how to use available resources.
- **Formal** training sessions on how to learn, how to apply what's been learned, and how to search additional learning opportunities.
- **Funding** for things like conferences, books, and even advanced degrees.
- **Time** set aside for learning. The investment of a few hours a week for employees as they learn and experiment carries a huge return.

## 6. Meet people where they are – on their mobile devices.

Learners are entering the workforce naturally using mobile devices for learning and social interaction. Leverage that by providing content that:

- **Primes learners.** Inform them what they need to learn, why it's important, and what they'll get out of it.
- **Promotes foundational concepts** important to understand before formal training events, level setting the participants' core knowledge base.
- **Reinforces formal training events** with reminders and even gamified learning content.
- **Presents** practice labs, scenarios, and application opportunities.
- **Feeds into a loop** for coaching and mentoring by SMEs.



## Conclusion

A continuous learning process improves the chances of employees applying new information and changing their behavior. It overcomes the obstacles that traditional training always runs into – discrete and disparate events after which employees quickly forget or ignore new information and knowledge.



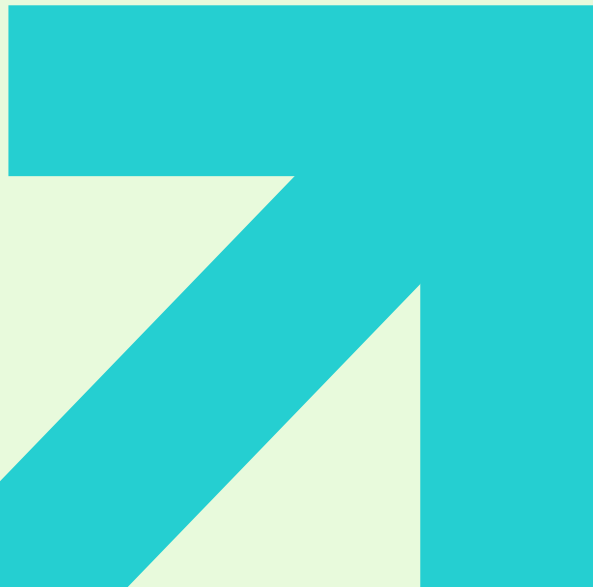
## Summary

In the shadow of the pandemic, L&D has secured a long-term, elevated role in their organizations.

While the changing business needs continue to demand rapid upskilling, reskilling, and measures to facilitate internal mobility that L&D teams must address – they can use this disruption as an opportunity to transform the learning culture and create and sustain a learning organization. I hope my eBook will serve as a guide to provide cues the L&D teams can use in this endeavor.

# Read More

1. [eBook: Creating Value Through Outsourcing - How L&D Teams Can Leverage Strategic Partnerships to Meet the Enhanced Expectations from the Business](#)
2. [How to Leverage the Training Needs Analysis Phase to Measure the Business Impact of Training?](#)
3. [Demonstrating Learning's Value to the Business](#)
4. [Case Studies](#)
5. [Demos](#)
6. [Insights](#)
7. [Learning Consulting Services](#)





# About EI Design

As a learning experience design company, we partner with customers in their **Digital Transformation** journey.

We help our customers deliver high-impact **Learning and Performance Support solutions** that offer:

- A high engagement quotient.
- Drive employee performance.
- Create high ROI for the learner, business, and organization.

We are certified as a **Smartchoice® Preferred Provider by Brandon Hall Group**. This is a testament to our expertise of nearly two decades in helping L&D teams deliver trainings that boost employee performance, impact business KPIs, and trigger behavioral change.



Our Virtual and Self-paced Online Trainings offer the **“triad of value”** to our customers by:

1. Creating “sticky” learning experiences.
2. Enabling effective application on the job.
3. Driving change in thinking and behavioral change.

**The “triad of value” is achieved through a wide spectrum of meaningful, relevant, thought-stimulating, and action-oriented learning interactivities.**

- These high engagement interactivities are designed to capture the learner’s attention and drive greater learning depth and length of retention.
- Through interactivities for practice, we help learners apply learning faster and effectively to their role and responsibilities.
- We have unique learner interactivities and techniques that trigger critical changes in how learners think about their approach to work.

We offer **Learning and Performance Consulting services** - Our comprehensive portfolio enables organizations to develop and execute strategies that drive individual, team, and organizational performance.

Our training strategies have consistently won stellar accolades over the last five years. Our effective training makes your workforce well-equipped and your business ready to succeed. With our expertise, you can also improve employee performance and leverage learning strategies that impact your business objectives.

# Thought Leadership - Testimonials



**Michael Rochelle**

Chief Strategy Officer and  
Principal HCM Analyst

**Brandon Hall Group**

El Design offers a unique value proposition that is rarely seen in the market. El Design assists organizations in optimizing the impact of learning on individual, team, and organizational performance and maximizing the ROI on learning.

By leveraging their impressive expertise and experience, El Design can lead an organization through the transformation of their learning from strategy to execution. El Design sets the bar in the industry for what an organization should expect from a learning provider.



- 3 Golds for Best Advance in Custom Content.
- Gold for Best Advance in Compliance Training.
- Silver for Best Advance in Onboarding Technology.
- Silver for Best Advance in Learning Management Measurement/Business Impact Tools.
- Bronze for Best New Hire Onboarding Program.
- Bronze for Best Use of Blended Learning.



**Christopher Pappas**

Founder

**eLearning Industry**

We've been working with EI Design on a day-to-day basis since April of 2015. Our smooth collaboration is based on trust. EI Design goes above and beyond to help evolve the world of eLearning with its expertise, strategies, and innovative ideas.

Gamification, Microlearning, Blended Learning, and training ROI are only some of their greatest strengths!

Companies can leverage their expertise to embark on a meaningful digital transformation journey. They deliver high-impact learning that focuses on a high engagement quotient. EI Design has a massive impact on how training makes a business reach success. They accomplish that by helping organizations drive employee performance. I trust that their methodologies and training needs analysis experience can lead companies to choose the proper training solutions.

EI Design has a constant flow of article publications, eBooks, and webinars on the eLearning Industry. Through their content, they offer valuable insights and solutions to Corporate Training buyers. Their assets are some of the most successful content marketing campaigns we've had. The above indicates that they are an established authority in several fields.

I'm grateful that we've found such skilled partners. They always give excellent directions/feedback and know what they want. We constantly set realistic deadlines with realistic expectations when working together. EI Design's assets exceed expectations most of the times because eLearning Industry's community is a big fan of their work.

The customer feedback we get for EI Design is excellent! Apart from the hundreds of thousands of eBook downloads, webinar registrations, and article page views, they've managed to collect 90+ reviews for their directory listing on eLearning Industry.

EI Design's team shows incredible dedication. Above all, their high-quality product offerings, creativity, and timely delivery are evident in every project they get their hands on. They never miss a deadline and put their heart and soul into their work.

I am humbled to have worked with a team of such high integrity and commitment to our mutual success—a truly great business partner.



# 19

rankings over the last 2 years



**Ken Taylor**  
President  
**Training Industry, Inc**

El Design's focus on the combination of learning and performance strategy with a specific attention to effective measurement of the business impact of their programs sets them apart from many of the vendors in the custom content segment of the market.

El Design demonstrates comfort leveraging either the best available technologies or customer selected technologies to develop impactful Blended Learning experiences.

El Design has established a very competitive pricing structure, which will support both long-term margin protection and perhaps, if leveraged correctly, growth that should outpace the general market. They have also built a business model where they can sell their services to both the end customers and other training and development companies.



2

rankings over the last 2 years

# Contact Us

## Looking at adopting new ways to enhance your Learning Strategy? EI Design can help you with that and more!

EI Design's comprehensive portfolio of services is not limited to Formal Training alone but will enable you to drive employee performance and bring in behavioral change.

### Training Delivery

- Mobile Learning.
- Microlearning.
- Virtual and Blended Training.
- Mobile Apps for Learning.
- Personalized Learning.
- Localization.
- eLearning Accessibility Considerations.

### Immersive Learning

- Gamification.
- Scenario Based Learning.
- Video Based Learning.
- Story Based Learning.
- Branching Simulations.
- Virtual Reality.
- Augmented Reality.
- Next Gen Strategies.

### Continuous Learning

- Performance Support Tools.
- Informal Learning.
- Social Learning.
- Self-Directed Learning.
- Content Curation.

### Learning Technologies

- LXP Expertise.
- LMS Expertise.
- Learning Portals.
- VR Framework.
- Interactive Video Framework.
- Rapid eLearning.
- Flash to HTML5 Migration.

### Training Impact and ROI

- ROI Determination.
- Predictive Learnability.
- Learner Analytics.

# Contact Us

## Training Needs We Address

- Compliance Training.
- Induction and Onboarding Training.
- Leadership Training.
- Sales Training.
- Application Simulations Training.
- Product Training.
- Soft Skills Training.
- Professional Skills Training.

## Key Learning Consulting Offerings

- Virtual Training Transformation.
- Measuring Training Effectiveness and Business Impact.
- Technology Migration.

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