

Reaping Benefits of Virtual Training: Part I

Virtual training supports green and cost-saving initiatives

 By Catherine Davis



At one time, I rolled around with a trunk full of software manuals and other training materials. As expected, these quickly became obsolete and eventually met their maker at a beachside bonfire. Yes, prior to 2002, I spent a significant amount of time on the road, delivering software training. After 9/11, based on budgets, an unknown economy, and other various reasons, the instructor-led training (ILT) deliveries and their related travel adventures significantly dwindled.

After seeing a few coworkers laid off, I decided to investigate how I could make myself invaluable so I was not caught in the crunch. I knew my willingness to pick up the office housekeeping and other basic clerical work would only get me so far. After a few Internet searches, I had the brilliant notion of how to deliver this same software training from my desk — with no travel time and for a fraction of the cost. It really did seem like an ingenious concept to me at the time. Looking back, my lack of knowledge on virtual delivery platforms seems utterly ridiculous!

Let's skip ahead to today. Many tools exist for the delivery of virtual training — or vILT, as those of us who are “in the know” call it. These range from the free and basic to the fee-based, offering an array of dazzling features. Virtual training supports green and cost-saving initiatives put forth by today's companies including:

Reduction in travel time impact and costs.

Flights, cars, hotels, renting conference rooms, meals and refreshments, etc. are all considerations when delivering an ILT. I will admit I have seen some fantastic places in my business travels, but some were certainly not on my bucket list!

Increased efficiency with reduced seat-time.

With the virtual platform, the content presentation is more likely kept on track (by muting participants) and creating designated windows for Q&A, discussions, and off-line collaboration or “homework.”

Significant reduction in printed materials.

Digital materials are easily maintained and up-to-date. Participants can print — or not — what is needed on-demand. I now must obtain my kindling from other sources.

Don't think of vILT sessions as an instructor delivering a PowerPoint® presentation over the web — that's a webinar, which does serve a purpose in certain instances. True vILT incorporates instructional design principles, and encourages participant engagement through the use of breakout rooms and other collaboration tools. **TEL**



Catherine Davis is SweetRush's Instructional Design Team Leader. Her deep experience as an instructional designer in various capacities (in-house corporate, vendor, freelance) means she truly understands the needs of our ID team and our clients. Catherine brings structure, efficiency, and continuous improvement to her role and our team, through documenting and sharing best practices, developing process, and crafting unique course storylines.

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Reaping Benefits Of Virtual Training: Part II

A few ideas to make your vILT a bit more interesting

 By Catherine Davis



Every time I get on a video call, I chuckle over the old joke about news anchors never wearing pants behind the news desk. Jokes aside, using video to communicate during a virtual training (vILT) session is one creative way to keep learners engaged.

In [part one of Reaping the Benefits of Virtual Training](#), I shared my experience of transitioning from instructor-led training (ILT) to vILT, as well as its obvious benefits. vILT should be fresh and appealing — not focused on a facilitator droning on and on through a series of bullet points. Here are a few ideas to make your vILT a bit more interesting:

Add Various Multimedia Elements. Don't get locked into just a slide deck! Add video and audio clips, infographics and animations, mini-games, fun and relevant polling questions, etc.

Use Video. The facilitator, as well as willing participants, can tune into a vILT session using video in addition to audio. Seeing the facilitator helps participants make a better emotional connection, which, of course, enhances learning. And, as noted earlier, everyone would only need to be groomed from the waist up for the session!

Add a Moderator to Assist the Facilitator. Especially for larger groups, a moderator can help ensure the session goes smoothly by:

- Being the timekeeper
- Feeding pertinent questions and comments to the facilitator. Questions and comments are kept relevant and on topic.
- Dealing with any technical or other challenges offline. How many times have you had to keep the group waiting because one person had trouble logging in?

Use of Break-out Rooms. Depending on the delivery platform, facilitators have various options for breaking a large group into several smaller ones to work on activities, brainstorm, etc.

Schedule Creatively. Who can really focus during a half-day vILT session? With a series of shorter sessions, there's a better chance of holding the attentions of participants. Additionally, participants will have a chance to “marinate” on the content and will likely get more out of subsequent sessions. Schedule sessions in one-hour segments over a designated period, like meeting, once a week at the same day and time.

Assign Easy “Homework” between those Shorter Sessions. This could be as simple as having learners list at least one takeaway from the session that can be immediately implemented on-the-job. Participants have the option of sending their thoughts to the facilitator. Sharing these takeaways is a fantastic way to kick off a session and provide a review from the previous week.

Throw in a few Relatable Jokes or Personal Anecdotes. Unique stories on the topic at hand enhance memory and help make a connection.

These are just a few techniques I have used over the years in vILT sessions. Get creative! The only limit is your imagination when it comes to making your virtual training session educational, fun, and memorable. **TEL**



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