



## EMPOWER EMPLOYEES TO LEARN IN NEW WAYS

# THE NEW ROLE OF 21ST CENTURY TRAINING

It's **estimated** that every two days, humanity creates more data and information than was produced between the dawn of civilization and 2003. And the pace of creation continues to increase.

The technology that supports this information explosion has so infiltrated our lives, that the workplace will never be the same. In much of the world, we have ubiquitous Internet access, devices that are always on, instant access to knowledge, and global interconnectedness. Static training events will no longer fulfill the needs of people working and living in this environment.

We've crossed an evolutionary threshold, where increasing numbers of workers can no longer retain all the knowledge required to do their jobs. The quantity of knowledge is too great and the speed of change is too quick. Knowledge-hungry employees will not hesitate to find expertise in other departments or in other countries.

Although there may always be a need to create custom learning experiences, forward-thinking training departments will know they must tackle so much more. Training professionals will need to support, guide and empower employees to learn in new ways.

Here are five emerging roles that should satisfy many of the training demands of the 21st century.

**Creating On-Demand and Mobile Content** — In many organizations, content is locked up in a learning management system or lost in skimpy handout notes, even though employees need immediate access. When organizational knowledge is not available on demand, there is a loss of productivity and performance. Future training roles will require specialists who can identify and produce quick-access performance support tools that aid task completion as well as bits of microlearning for mobile learning on-the-go.

**Curating Content** — The role of the content curator is to leverage existing resources for specific audiences within the organization. The online curator researches, filters, collects and annotates knowledge gleaned from diverse sources. He or she will provide this content using an online curation tool. Possible sources of content might include Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) from top universities, expert demonstrations on YouTube, iTunes University podcasts and relevant articles.

**Empowering Learners** — As the workplace structure flattens, employees become more responsible and accountable for their own learning. There is a future role for the learning and development professional to educate the organization's experts on how to generate content and to teach employees about the internal and external tools for building a knowledge network. For example, content generation by experts can include taking photos and shooting demonstration videos in the field as well as writing how-to articles.

**Promoting Collaborative Learning** — Cognitive research demonstrates that learning in the workplace is often informal and is enhanced through social interaction. There is a role for the training professional to promote collaborative learning by guiding employees to develop their own personal learning networks. Training groups can also take responsibility for creating and managing communities of practice, where employees who have similar interests can interact with each other online and in-person.

**Building Relationships** — The astute training professional will identify persistent problems in an organization and pre-empt critical meltdowns by offering assistance from experts. Thus, another role of the learning and development team will be to reach across organizational silos or outside of the organization, as appropriate, to experts anywhere. Building relationships with these experts is the best way to break down internal barriers and to assure that the organization has help when it's needed.

The 21st century training group will be in a unique position to empower employees toward self-directed learning, contribution and engagement. It may seem like a scary new world, but it's an exciting one too. It's a world where forward-thinking organizations become the winners because their policies and strategies will enhance employee learning, productivity and performance well into the future.

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