



Is eLearning Failing Your Organization?

by Mathew Georghiou

Let's face it – salary bonuses, time off for courses and seminars, and revenue-sharing incentives aren't the best solution to improving employee and organizational performance. These activities, while somewhat beneficial, do not deliver what employees need most – experience.

Experience is the one key ingredient that individuals need to improve their performance, and that of the organization. Whether for sales, marketing, customer service, operations, or leadership, experience is what sets people and organizations apart – the more you have, the more likely you are to succeed.

The fact is, experience cannot be gained through the use of conventional training methods. Books, courses, and seminars are too often ineffective and inefficient. Even highly touted eLearning (Internet-based learning) is often no better than "eReading," basically delivering text and graphics through the Internet with little thought given to the quality of the learning experience.

Forrester Research reports that "in spite of the cost savings, current Net-based education efforts won't deliver what companies need most: better employee performance."

Yet eLearning continues to be adopted at high rates, most likely for its two primary benefits:

- Cost savings. Often, costs due to travel and time away from work consume the majority of an organization's training budget. eLearning significantly reduces these costs.
- Increased accessibility. Due to the high costs noted above, most face-to-face training is not available to all employees. With Internet delivery, eLearning enables an organization to offer courses to all employees, anywhere, at anytime.

These are very compelling benefits to any organization. But training is not just about delivering as many courses as inexpensively as possible – training is about improving performance. And unless the training provided is of high quality and delivered properly, performance will suffer and a return on investment will not be realized.

In fact, recent research demonstrates that even when employees are provided access to eLearning, few participate (only 69% for mandatory courses and 32% for voluntary), and of those who do, few actually complete a course. (*Source: ASTD/The Masie Center, "E-Learning: If We Build It, Will They Come?"*)

Why the failing grade? To some the reasons are obvious: most people simply don't enjoy the process of studying, writing tests, and being evaluated. Not to mention the requirement to take time away from work and personal commitments, all of which pile up during the training.

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The research noted above concludes, "Learners are driven most by their own intrinsic motivation and personal development plans – not by external factors."

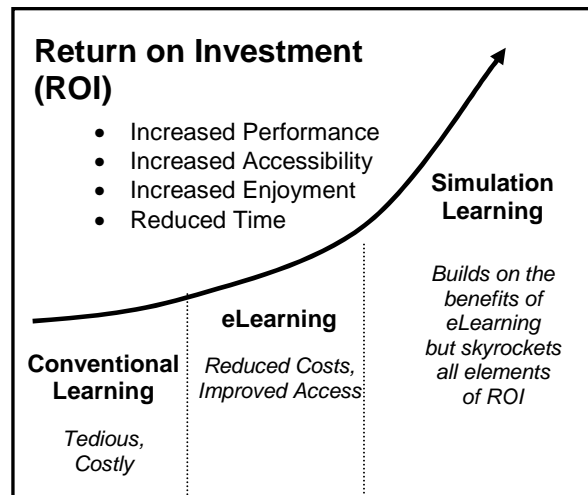
For training to be successful for the individual, it must be compelling to the learner at a personal level. And for training to be successful at an organizational level, it must improve on-the-job performance. The answer: eLearning simulation. Technology advancements have changed *where* and *when* we learn, but they have not improved *how well* we learn. eLearning simulation accomplishes all three because it can be delivered via CD-ROM or the Internet, enabling anywhere, anytime access, and it takes advantage of computer technology to provide a very different and compelling learning experience:

"...simulation improves performance unlike any other type of learning method."

- Engaging learners emotionally and intellectually so that they want to learn.
- Enabling learners to learn faster and retain more of what they learn.
- Accommodating different interests and learning styles.
- Equipping learners with relevant, immediately applicable knowledge.
- Developing problem-solving skills that are transferable to other situations.

Simulations make learning exciting by combining education, entertainment, and technology to provide highly visual, interactive, and engaging learning experiences. For the individual, this means a greater likelihood of participating and completing the training. For the organization, this means employees who have gained experience, and made mistakes inside the simulation, not the real world.

The bottom line: simulation improves performance unlike any other type of learning method, and many now believe it to be the next evolution in training.



When individual and organizational performance improves, everything else follows – revenue, profit, morale, loyalty, opportunity, and success.

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