



**On demand learning: blended learning  
for today's evolving workforce.**

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**Executive summary**

Retaining top talent in today's competitive market requires a new approach to training strategy. This paper is intended for learning and human resources professionals concerned about creating effective learning for today's emerging workforce, as well as reducing high attrition rates in the new corporate climate.

The learning needs and expectations of today's growing employment segments of Generation X and the Millennial workers require companies to start creating on demand learning solutions that address both the generational needs and technology changes that are part of today's marketplace.

This document presents a point of view regarding what characterizes the expectations of this growing workforce segment, how these expectations can translate into an effective on demand learning solution, and what companies must do next to transition to an on demand learning model.

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**Highlights**

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***Fully understanding your employees' perspectives and ideals is a first step in executing a successful learning strategy.***

**Introduction**

There's a nervous twitch to business today. Companies are jockeying to position themselves strategically in an unfamiliar, global, on demand climate. They're competing for market share using new technology, new attitudes, new processes and new thinking. Perhaps most fundamentally, they're competing for top talent in a rapidly evolving workforce; and once on board, that talent is even more challenging to retain. The May 2005 edition of the monthly Spherion Job Transition Index, for example, indicated a staggering 39 percent of surveyed workers planned to look for a new job within the next year.<sup>1</sup> Successful companies, reacting to the twitch, recognize that today's new workforce demands a new approach to training.

The Baby Boom Generation is beginning to retire; Generation X is firmly established; and the Millennials are steadily joining the workforce. What does this mean for your company's training approach? This new, younger, intrinsically different staff can't be trained in the same manner that the maturing workforce has traditionally been trained. Today's successful training program needs to take a close look at the makeup of the new learner and address some very distinct characteristics not seen before in the corporate world. The good news is that the technology and strategies behind the solution are here already; it's the way in which learning delivery is tailored and blended that will get the message through and ultimately convince your biggest asset that you understand their needs and are committed to their growth and success.

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<b>Generation</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Percentage of workforce in the U.S.</b>
WWII Generation	Before 1940	5
Baby Boom Generation	1940–1960	45
Generation X	1960–1980	40
Millennial Generation*	1980–2000	10

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*\*(Also Echo Boomers or Generation Y)*

*Source: "Meet the Generations," Claire Raines & Associates, GenerationsAtWork.com, 2005*

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**Highlights**

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***To keep retention rates high  
and grow their knowledge capital,  
companies today must offer  
continuing skill growth to employees.***

***Five core factors significantly  
influence employee retention.***

**Profiling today's learner**

There's a new breed of learners in today's workforce; they work in a whole new employment climate, shaped by new perspectives and ideals. Not so many years ago, today's newer generations may have been cautioned by well-intentioned, more traditional Baby Boomers, imploring them to avoid frequent job-hopping. Indeed, these seasoned employees still remember when job-hoppers were perceived to lack loyalty and work ethic. The employment climate has transitioned though; those days of employees committing their entire career to a single company seem foreign to most workers now. In fact, that degree of loyalty can carry a reverse stigma these days; those workers with extended years at one company are often perceived by recruiters as having out-of-date skills.

The more recent trend in career growth has seen candidates vary their work experience and job-shop corporations that are eager to lure prospective employees, and take their well-established skill set off of one payroll and onto another. Corporations faced with this pattern are being forced to offer continuing skill growth as one part of the equation to keeping retention rates high and growing their knowledge capital.

In 2003, Spherion, the fourth-largest American staffing firm and a leader in human capital consulting, commissioned the *Emerging Workforce Study* on motivating and retaining talented employees. An article sponsored by Spherion interprets the study and identifies five core factors that significantly influence whether employees stay or go: culture and work environment; compensation; training and development; supervisor role; and growth and earnings potential. Two out of the five retention drivers—training and development, and growth and earning potential—indicate that employers need to focus on employee development. The study further indicates that employers score very low with workers in these areas.<sup>2</sup> Employers should be taking notice of the different attitudes, habits and characteristics of today's worker—this new breed requires an adapted approach to employee development.

In order to build a training program that suits today's learner, we first have to understand the characteristics of these learners. We must profile their distinctive features. What do they value most in their work climate? How do they

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***Generation X and Millennial  
Generation workers are willing  
participants in any relevant learning  
experience, and value learning as  
a means to reach their goals.***

approach work and life? What are their preferences? Expert analysts, considering factors that defined the era in which these new workers were reared, as well as the social and technological state of their world, have written about the characteristics of Generation X and the Millennial Generation.<sup>3,4,5,7</sup> Their analysis reveals a new set of workforce values that includes:

- *Relevant development*
- *Rich experiences*
- *Flexibility*
- *Community*
- *Technology*
- *Instant results*

**Relevant development:** These can-do go-getters have high self-esteem and a competitive nature. They value learning as a means to reach their goals—and they have a lot of goals. For these employees, information is everywhere and easy to get; they're accustomed to seeking knowledge. They appreciate the opportunity to develop and are willing participants in any *relevant* learning experience. If you articulate desired outcomes and if the learning will help achieve the goal, they'll reach for it.

**Rich experiences:** The Generation X and Millennials in today's corporate world place a lot of value on *experiences*. They grew up with music videos, computer-animated movies and video games; they're used to being highly engaged, entertained and stimulated. They want to explore and experiment in life. They're looking for rich experiences where they get to do, try and apply—they're not content to passively observe life. In fact, they've done a lot of living in their short lives and they're eager to show you, and anyone who'll pay them the attention, what they can do and what they know. They also want the straight story. Tell them why they should care and they probably will.

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***Today's new employees are experts at multitasking—and they want to fit work around their busy lives.***

***Generation X and Millennial Generation workers come pre-skilled with computer proficiencies and a built-in acceptance for new technology.***

**Flexibility:** This group has always known how to schedule, as many grew up in single-parent households or with both parents working full-time jobs. Consequently, they were responsible for getting themselves home from school, off to soccer practice, to a movie with friends, and then home again. They learned to balance both responsibility and fun in life, and to make their own choices. They're expert multitaskers. As adults in the workforce, they want *flexible* schedules; they'll get it all done, on time, but they want to do it their way, fitting work around life.

**Community:** Today's new employees are social, open-minded and collaborative. Growing up, they were taught to be inclusive and interdependent. They relied on family, friends and teachers; where worlds overlapped, there was a sense of common interests and goals. Today, these employees recognize that they have individual strengths that when joined with the diverse strengths of others build a greater power. They believe in collaboration, diversity and teaming. Their teaming tendencies also cross cultural, social and geographic borders effortlessly; to them, it's second nature.

**Technology:** Computers, video games, cell phones, the Internet – this generation of employees has embraced technology in every part of life. Some of them have never known life without a computer. What does that mean to them in the workforce? It means that they're not intimidated by technology; there's no learning curve for the medium before they get to the message. There's never been a more technologically savvy workforce; this workforce comes pre-skilled with computer proficiencies and a built-in acceptance for new technology.

**Instant results:** These are around-the-clock, I-want-it-*now*, speed junkies. Today's workers grew up in the era of microwaves, drive-thru restaurants, express check-out and the Internet. They epitomize the On Demand Business

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***Training is in the early stages of transitioning to accommodate a new generation of employees who have been shaped by emerging technologies and changing global perspectives.***

***Today's workforce wants the opportunity to adequately equip themselves with relevant knowledge to face new challenges.***

philosophy saturating business today; they value speed, efficiency and relevancy. They want gratification and results. Give them stimulation, feedback and rewards. They won't be happy with passive observation; they want to participate and do it *now*.

It's clear that workers today have been shaped by emerging technologies, changing global perspectives and parenting from a generation who wanted more for their kids. Keeping these dynamic new employees motivated and productive in your company takes a new approach. Today's training is in the early stages of transitioning to accommodate these dynamic new learners; the solutions are available – it's time to put them to work.

**Profiling today's learning**

In his paper, "Game Based Learning: Present and Future State of the Field," Kurt Squire, Ph.D., writes, "Successful companies no longer only train employees in skills; they motivate employees to adopt the perspectives and goals of the company, and empower employees to work creatively for the company."<sup>6</sup>

Where yesterday's workforce often faced new challenges armed only with the sheer determination required to plough through issues, today's workforce wants the opportunity to continuously gain new knowledge and skills and adequately equip themselves to face new challenges. Previously, the occasional classroom training designed to retool employees was often inefficient, costly, too broad in scope and highly disruptive to the momentum needed to power through daily problems. In the last ten years, there's been a shift to online learning in an effort to address some of these weaknesses; but, too

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***Companies must retool instructors  
and course managers with the  
knowledge they need to keep  
learners engaged.***

often corporations have taken that to mean that they should simply transfer content to the Web. The result was often e-reading and not e-learning. Today's training needs to suit an on demand world, be tailored to multiple schedules and learning styles, be marginally disruptive and be fun.

If we look at the values we identified above, we can address each one in terms of how learning can be tailored to suit today's learners.

**Relevant development:** This goal-oriented segment of your workforce is eager to learn and apply new skills. As long as they perceive the objectives as relevant, they're willing to go for it. That means you've got to provide a clear message in your training program; give them a clear vision of why your curriculum matters to them. Create motivation and they'll get on board.

Provide multiple channels to allow these learners to seek out more information. If you're launching a new multilayered program tailored for your new workforce, be sure you're retooling your team of instructors. Give your instructors and course managers the knowledge *they* need to keep your learners engaged.

**Rich experiences:** Confucius said, "Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand." As learning designers, we need to engage our learners in an experience that they can relate to, both within the learning environment and on the job. It's not good enough anymore to stream material out to your audience and hope that they retain some data while determining for themselves how to apply it back on the job. Learning

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***With experiential learning, companies can simulate a real work scenario, while incorporating elements including activities, feedback, storytelling, games and interaction.***

professionals need to design relevant, rich curriculums that put to use activities, scenarios, feedback, storytelling, simulations, games and interaction. Today's learners need to engage with the content and have fun doing it; they want to explore and see for themselves the value of the training.

Experiential learning provides a safe environment that simulates a real work scenario. Learners are encouraged to explore content—a sales process, for example—and discover through trial and error the virtues of that process. Simulated experiences should respond to learner interactions in a job-realistic fashion. In other words, if the real world provides a consequence for an action, the learning experience should also. Rewards and consequences can demonstrate the impact of a job well done or an error in judgment.

Providing relevant, real-world experiences for learners to engage with content creates a rich experience with greater impact on job transfer.

**Flexibility:** How do we tailor learning to fit a demographic that's busy multitasking in their lives to create balance? It's no longer suitable to gather a group of learners together in one location and keep them in a classroom for five days of continuous training. That's time that they could be contributing to your business and their lives. Learning needs to occur in smaller chunks of time, and, to some degree, be available at varying times.

Consider training programs that require only a part-time commitment. Self-study modules, Web-based training, virtual classroom sessions and face-to-face workshops can all be blended to provide a comprehensive curriculum. And they can be chunked out in such a manner that flexibility is available for those multitasking employees with commitments filling up their days.

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***Companies can create a collaboration community via virtual classrooms, face-to-face workshops, online discussion forums and e-mail.***

**Community:** Today's employees want to feel like they belong to a community. That's good news since collaboration in the workplace helps everyone. So why not provide that sense of community in your training program? Give your learners a chance to share ideas and synergize. This will facilitate their learning and give them the sense of community they habitually seek.

Collaboration among curriculum participants can occur in virtual classrooms, face-to-face workshops and even online discussion forums. Even e-mail can be built into a curriculum as a feedback or collaboration vehicle. With the emerging workforce of today, a sense of community is no longer achieved only in real-time, face-to-face environments; synergy can be fostered in just about any asynchronous delivery modality.

**Technology:** Since this workforce has grown up in an era of advanced communication technology, they're a natural fit for any blend of remote training. Whether it's mobile learning on a wireless phone or iPod, Web-based learning on your intranet, online discussion forums or remote virtual classroom experiences, these employees are ready to embrace it. Layers of content, interaction and fun are the secrets to using technology to its greatest advantage in a learning application.

**Instant results:** These speed junkies need stimulation and they need it now. What does that mean when they're learning? It means they need a variety of activities and interactions and they need to move at a fairly rapid pace. They want instant feedback and rewards, so be sure to let them apply new knowledge immediately after content has been presented, and let them know how well they performed.

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***A blended learning curriculum  
can provide today's workers with  
a meaningful learning experience  
that suits their core characteristics.***

**Today's blend of on demand learning**

There are many reasons to consider a blended curriculum. We can talk about learning styles, budget considerations, content and format suitability, and even scheduling and travel costs. We've learned, however, that perhaps a more compelling reason to consider a blended curriculum is the learning makeup of today's new workforce. It's not possible to offer these dynamic new employees a meaningful learning experience, suiting their core characteristics, without using a varied blend of delivery modalities.

What does that blend look like? Let's consider a scenario for a national retail company's new hire training program. The challenge is to create a formal performance-based learning program for new employees in the retail selling division. A current disparity they hope to correct is the inconsistency in the "customer experience" from store to store, nationwide. Keeping our new-generation workforce in mind, the curriculum is part-time and much of it is self-paced. We'll spread the training over phases spanning three weeks using the following delivery modalities:

- *Self-study learning guides*
- *Web-based training*
- *Web-based discussion forums*
- *Online workshops*
- *Mobile wireless courseware*
- *Face-to-face workshops*

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***Blended learning allows companies to mix scheduled and unscheduled training modules and structured and unstructured learning experiences, as well as provide self-paced material to keep today's learners engaged.***

Remember, part of the key is the blend itself; varying delivery modalities helps us provide flexibility. Blending allows for a mix of scheduled and unscheduled learning modules and structured and unstructured learning experiences, as well as the natural pace differences among your learners. Providing self-paced material such as learning guides and Web-based training, any-time support elements like a discussion forum or e-mail, and real-time online or face-to-face workshops offers a mix of modalities to keep your *flexible* learners engaged while giving them the freedom to manage their own schedules. Let's have a look at why a blend like this one suits today's dynamic workforce.

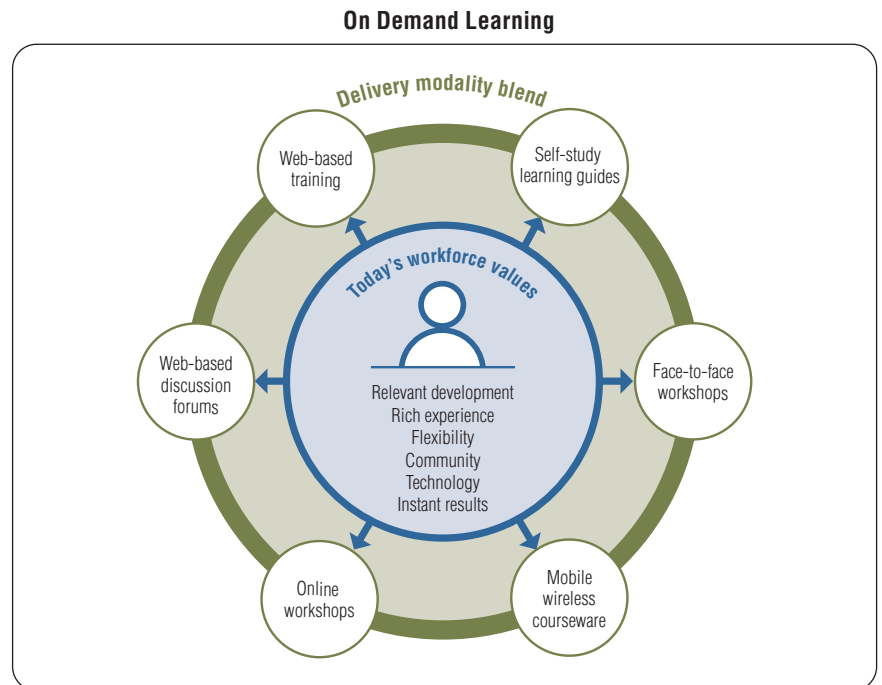
In our example scenario, we have newly hired sellers on-boarding into a fast-paced retail environment. The company culture rewards sales performance with monetary compensation, typically on a commission basis—that's a key driver for the sales force. We want to build on that incentive and get them contributing quickly. With buy-in from store managers, we can manage a split between on-the-floor time and training time for these new hires. That way, they're closer to selling and can build on what they learn every day by participating with other sellers on the floor in real customer interactions. We'll get

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them started in their training program with a welcome phone call from their course manager—a training mentor who'll guide them through their part-time curriculum. The initial phone call confirms understanding of the curriculum path, the learner's role and goals, and takes care of some administrative details such as ensuring that user ID and passwords are functioning so the learner can access e-mail and online courseware.



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***Self-study learning guides offer an effective low-tech, low-cost learning method that can be integrated with a blended learning strategy.***

**Self-study learning guides:** Consider this low-tech, low-cost learning avenue—it has a lot of merit as part of a comprehensive learning blend. The perception is that self-study entails reading chapters of dry content, maybe some note-taking, and an occasional test submission to prove you've completed a module. Typically, a self-study workbook format tends to remove the learning benefits of interaction and knowledge-sharing; it's offered as an independent-study tool. It doesn't have to be that way.

How should you apply this modality to our scenario? Provide a mix of engaging reading material, simulations, and online and in-store activities, support it with online collaboration tools and virtual workshops, and you've got an interactive element to support your curriculum—one that's suited to your dynamic workforce. Once you've presented your subject matter in a workbook and encouraged reflection, send your course participants out on the sales floor with activities involving job-shadowing, observation of the sales process or demonstrations with store managers. Or send them online to a learning management system (LMS) to experience system simulations or Web-based courseware, or a discussion board for collaboration and idea-sharing with other employees working through the same curriculum. Self-study doesn't have to involve a solitary environment, a lot of reading and a distinct lack of application of new information. Your learners want to explore new concepts and experience the value for themselves.

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***Executing a successful e-learning strategy involves applying it as part of an innovative blend of learning designed to suit the subject matter, the medium and the audience.***

Self-study also allows your new employees the flexibility to schedule their training time around other commitments that they may have to colleagues and managers. Remember, today's learners *want* to build their skills and are driven to learn. They also want the opportunity to put new knowledge to work immediately. With self-study elements in a curriculum, they get flexibility, responsibility and rich experiences.

**Web-based training:** We know that today's worker embraces technology; so anything "e" ought to keep them happy, right? Not exactly. In the last ten years there's been a great buzz touting e-learning as a fix-all for corporate training woes; put all your training online and you'll save the cost of travel and the cost of tearing employees away from on-the-job productivity. Web-enabling existing training promised the added benefit of putting the onus on your employees to find what they need, when they need it—call it just-in-time training. But what effect does this solution have on learning? Even when a company achieves a high degree of quality when transferring its classroom-based learning online, it's important to realize that "e-fitting" training and eliminating other, sometimes more costly, delivery modalities can be a disservice to learners, potentially reducing their ability to learn. A narrow approach like this overlooks critical success factors in learning such as matching content to appropriate delivery modalities, and providing flexibility and real-time community interaction. The outcome of course is a disservice to the operation's bottom line.

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***By using principle-based and Web-based learning in tandem, learners can build foundational knowledge and comprehension, begin to apply new skills and analyze through reasoning.***

In 2002, Thomson and NETg conducted a study reporting that performance improvement increased when learning occurred through a blended curriculum – faster than when learning happened through e-learning alone.<sup>7</sup> The key to making e-learning work is to apply it as a part of an innovative blend of learning, and to infuse sound instructional design – suiting the subject matter, the medium and the audience.

Rich experiences are key to meeting the learning needs of today's workers. Storytelling, simulations and games in e-learning help to create rich, layered, relevant experiences. For our national company's retail new hire training program, let's consider cognitive apprenticeship online – a guided discovery enabling learners to employ strategic thinking to solve problems. This simulated environment offers learners a safe place to discover appropriate actions by applying new knowledge and skills to specific customer situations. Whereas procedural learning, such as process-related Web-based courses, may be designed to present the specifics of a sales process, this immersive game-style learning facilitates the application of content in more detailed and realistic context, and effectively illustrates the value of properly executing the sales process. Principle-based learning like this is designed to teach learners to use judgment and knowledge to adapt procedures and select appropriate actions for any situation. By using both formats in tandem, learners build foundational knowledge and comprehension, and begin to apply new skills and even analyze through reasoning. In the end, we're helping the new hire trainee to think with new knowledge, on the fly, in a real customer interaction. This approach is designed to provide highly relevant training, in a manner directly transferable to job performance.

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***Online discussion forums are an effective way to foster workplace collaboration—it's important to include open-ended questions and cues to stimulate discussion among users.***

This Web-based solution is a relevant, rich experience, using technology and built-in rewards and consequences for instant results. It's a perfectly packaged solution to meet the learning needs of today's employee.

**Web-based discussion forums:** Donald Clark, CEO of Epic Group, writes in "White paper: Collaboration in e-learning," that "The social dimensions of the Internet, its ability to allow individuals and groups to communicate across space and time, has proven to be as important (if not more important) than the content it carries."<sup>8</sup>

We've identified collaboration as a key driver for today's employee. An effective way to foster collaboration in our company's blended curriculum is to offer an online discussion forum. A virtual discussion board offers learners an asynchronous means of sharing ideas and experiences. Unlike virtual and face-to-face synchronous workshops, online discussion forums offer learners optimum scheduling flexibility. They can visit the forum when it's convenient for them – virtually any time, from almost anywhere – reflect on concepts in threaded discussions, and then respond in their own time. That extra time available for reflection often results in deeper interaction with concepts and a broader examination of differing perspectives. The benefits are clear, but there's a catch. Studies examining the effectiveness of online discussion forums indicate that many Web collaboration initiatives suffer from low rates of participation; more often than not, these environments wind up as virtual ghost towns.<sup>8</sup>

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***Well-facilitated and well-designed instruction helps companies make the most of a blended learning strategy and ties all its components together.***

Well-designed instruction helps eliminate the risk of tumbleweed overtaking your online discussion board. The key to making a success of online discussion boards is to include topics within your curriculum that contain open-ended questions and cues to stimulate discussion among participants, for instance: *“Consider how you would handle the following objection from a customer... share your approach with your virtual classmates using the discussion forum.”*

By creating discussion triggers within classroom or self-study modules, for example, you can lead your participants to a discussion board and encourage the kinds of asynchronous discussions that generate in-depth examination of concepts. Learning facilitators, your retooled instructors, should further influence participation with their presence in the discussion, and by their deliberate steering of discussion points to maintain focus on the curriculum. Well-facilitated instruction carries learning through all the delivery modalities in a blended curriculum; well-designed instruction makes the most of a blend and ties all its components together.

**Online workshops:** Taking part of your curriculum into a virtual classroom serves today's workforce well. The learners in our new hire training will participate in a short workshop where they can apply what they've studied in a collaborative session with their peers. Make the session relevant to its preceding self-study modules by giving your learners the chance to apply some of their new knowledge in a skill-practice session. Present a customer scenario and invite them to apply to it their knowledge of the sales process. In a collaborative session like this one, your facilitators can provide immediate feedback, and invite relevant real-time discussion among the participants.

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***Online workshops in a virtual classroom environment encourage users to discuss their newly acquired knowledge and skills, and help to confirm their comprehension.***

Frequent and relevant interaction with new concepts creates a direct channel to learning. A timely touchpoint with your participants in the virtual classroom gets them discussing their newly accumulated knowledge and skills and confirms their comprehension. Sharing experiences with the content also contributes to a sense of community among your new hires. As e-learning author Ruth Clark writes, “use the virtual classroom for the things it does best: to visualize content, to promote interactivity and to facilitate collaboration.”<sup>9</sup>

In our scenario, we want training results that arm our sales staff with the ability to think on their feet and apply the sales process using good judgment. So let's build on the sales process training we've done outside of any collaborative environment and put it to work with live role play. First, present visual scenarios with static or animated images of a sales interaction and then challenge each participant to react to situations using their growing knowledge of the sales process. They'll be thinking on their feet and applying judgment, but in a safe environment where the facilitator and their peers can provide immediate feedback on their performance.

Remember, these dynamic learners want to apply their knowledge in relevant environments, and they want immediate feedback. The virtual classroom fits the bill.

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***Mobile learning (m-learning) is a delivery method with the potential to become a major contributor to performance enhancement.***

**Mobile wireless courseware:** Your new workforce is on the go; they embrace technology; and they expect instant results in life. Enter mobile learning (m-learning). This is a delivery modality that is gaining a lot of attention for its potential to become a major contributor to performance enhancement, especially in the retail sales industry. By using a portable, handheld device like a PDA (personal digital assistant) or a mobile phone, learners can access short learning bites where and when they need them. They can also use available moments in their busy schedules for impromptu learning. Even iPods are finding their way under the learning technology umbrella, emerging as an auditory delivery method that proponents claim can “free learning from the tyranny of time and location.”<sup>10</sup>

In our new hire scenario, learners are expected to contribute to the business while enrolled in their new hire training. Consider a participant job-shadowing a seasoned customer sales rep on the shop floor; between customer interactions, the participant can use his or her wireless device to access a short module on any element of the sales process just observed. As a refresher or as a new examination of content, this is the ultimate platform for learning. Also, as a follow-on to new hire training, m-learning can provide up-to-the-minute product training to keep our sellers in tune with the features and benefits of the latest products. Regardless of location, time or space, m-learning can be available.

**Face-to-face workshops:** All of the synchronous, asynchronous, virtual and self-study components in our curriculum contribute effectively to reaching our program objectives. However, to have the greatest impact on learning, even our hip, young, technology-infatuated workforce requires that your blend incorporate a face-to-face social learning component.

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***Elements that make face-to-face classroom experiences effective include group activities, role playing, skill application and immediate and relevant feedback.***

For our example scenario, we'll bring participants into a classroom for a full day on two occasions: once mid-way through the program, and again at the conclusion of the program. Removing them from daily work and personal responsibilities means that they can designate a full, uninterrupted day for learning and networking with their peers. The classroom experience should be rich and interactive, making the most of the only delivery modality offering real-time, face-to-face interaction. Group activities, role playing, skill application, immediate and relevant feedback and the camaraderie gained from bringing together individuals with common goals are what make this delivery format irreplaceable.

Since our goal is to get our new sales force selling, our program culminates in a final assessment requiring each participant to successfully complete a sales interaction through role play. In order to help ensure training transfer, we need to replicate, as closely as possible, a real customer interaction. So we'll spend classroom time on activities, discussion and practicing selling skills through role play. To further enhance the experience, our scenarios and exercises will involve wrenches and rewards. Staying true to real life, situations will come with built-in snags to which participants will have to react and overcome. As well, by employing a team structure and a point system, high performance will be rewarded in the form of point accumulation. Motivate your learners. Pit teams against one another in healthy competition – make it relevant and fun for them.

This practical application of curriculum subject matter comes with the added benefit of immediate and flexible feedback from the instructor. Participants are encouraged to engage with more complex material, and react to simulated

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***A purposefully blended training strategy can meet the level of commitment and investment expected of employers by today's workforce, and help companies retain top talent.***

situations, in a safe and supportive environment. Most learning technology today strives to closely replicate real-life environments as much as possible; in fact, we talk about the “experience” each modality provides. Imagine if we only ever existed in simulated environments, and one day someone released “reality” to the world—we’d probably never go back to a simulated existence. Let’s not forget the rich benefits of social learning in a face-to-face environment. Of course, as with all the components in our blended program, the key is to tailor the experience to your audience. Their learning needs cross over through all modalities.

This comprehensive blended curriculum addresses the needs of today’s worker and provides an ideal vehicle for employee development for the national company in our scenario. The learning mix we’ve created provides a formal program, delivering consistent content with the creative and varied approach required to reach today’s emerging workforce.

**Conclusion**

IBM identifies *On Demand Business* as a new way for companies to operate in today’s competitive market—faster, more efficiently and focused only on activities that build value. An On Demand Business is engineered for change, so it can sense and respond to shifts in the marketplace, dodging traps and seizing opportunities without slowing down or wasting effort.

Achieving this engineering is important because the business world is radically different than it was ten, even five, years ago. The same can be said of today’s workforce; they’re demanding a new level of commitment and investment from their employers. If you can’t deliver, they’ll move on and you’ll lose the fight for your industry’s top talent.

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***Leveraging thought leadership,  
IBM engages with clients and  
applies industry experience to  
help tailor learning solutions to  
companies' unique environments.***

A purposefully blended training strategy is part of the solution – a strategy tailored to suit today's talented and dynamic employees. By keeping step with changing technologies and an evolving workforce, you can meet the training demands of your biggest asset – your knowledge capital. You can show them that you're committed to their growth and achievement. If you can accomplish this, you can anticipate that your employees may not only stick around, but they'll also be positioned to meet the demands of a shifting marketplace and find new ways to deliver value to your clients.

**Why IBM?**

IBM provides thought leadership in learning solutions. From strategy to creative design and content management, from technology architecture to learning delivery, and from partnering to learning outsourcing, IBM engages with its clients and applies industry experience in response to the learning challenges facing corporations today. With our learning expertise, experience and industry knowledge, we enable client success by applying learning innovations to specific learning challenges. By thinking outside the box and creating winning solutions, we gain our clients' trust and confidence.

IBM learning solutions can easily be tailored to your unique environment. We can help you implement a comprehensive solution or provide just the pieces you need, when you need them. We help you deliver learning in the most efficient way possible – virtually anytime, almost anywhere, through multiple delivery options. We can create and deliver learning for the on demand world that matters to you.

## About the author

Suzanne Robert is a member of Generation X as well as a certified Instructional Designer with a degree in writing and a diploma in advertising. A proponent of creative and innovative learning solutions, Suzanne is a senior e-Learning Specialist with IBM's Learning Content group in Canada.

Suzanne has eight years of experience applying her creative design and writing skills to continuously emerging learning technologies. She provides expert skills in analysis, strategy, instructional design, development and implementation of customized Web-based training, classroom-based training and blended curriculums.

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09-05  
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