# A New Lease on Learning

## Synchronous Online Organizational Training and Development

In today’s fast-paced, information-driven business environment, the need for efficient, cost-effective, and results-oriented organizational training and development is more important than ever before. Regardless of industry, CLOs and training executives understand that developing employee skills and building institutional knowledge is directly related to business performance.

Many organizations are extending traditional classroom and asynchronous, self-paced training with synchronous eLearning. But this technology must go beyond simple web conferencing for meetings and presentations to enable real-time interactivity, ad hoc collaboration, and anywhere, anytime access.

## Moving at the Pace of Business: Summary of Organizational Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>SOLUTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost cutting while maintaining current, or better,</td>
<td>Enable convenient online training as good as, or better than, face-to-face training, without travel or extended time away from job</td>
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<td>level of training and development</td>
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<td>Effective leadership and workforce development and</td>
<td>Accelerate pace of learning and provide opportunities for continuous learning without loss of productivity</td>
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<td>retention</td>
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<td>Expensive, lengthy employee onboarding process</td>
<td>Facilitate onboarding completely online or blend online/on-site with real-time or recorded sessions, scheduled or at employee’s convenience</td>
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<td>Mobile workforce that must work collaboratively and</td>
<td>Enable employees to communicate and collaborate in regularly scheduled online meetings or ad hoc sessions accessible from desktop, laptop, or mobile device</td>
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<td>virtually on a global level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of institutional knowledge resulting from high</td>
<td>Allow professional development via online sessions, in real time, for cost-effective skills advancement and knowledge sharing</td>
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<td>turnover rates and aging employees</td>
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<td>High costs for training facility, equipment, and</td>
<td>Increase capacity and leverage existing trainers with online participants who can join from where ever they are</td>
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<td>personnel; lack of space</td>
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Training Expenditures on the Rise Even in Tough Economy

*Training* magazine’s 2011 Training Industry Report shows that while the economic roller coaster ride continues, training appears to be on an upswing as the total 2011 U.S. training expenditures—including payroll and spending on external products and services—jumped 13 percent to $59.7 billion. Some 32 percent of respondents reported that their training budget increased—up from 24 percent last year. Likewise, training payroll increased substantially, from $25.7 billion to $31.3 billion, and spending on outside products and services jumped more than $2 billion to $9.1 billion.

In its 2011 State of the Industry Report, ASTD estimates that U.S. organizations spent $1,228 per learner on employee learning and development in 2010. Nearly two-thirds was spent on the internal learning function, such as staff salaries and internal development costs. The remainder was allocated to external services such as workshops, vendors, and external events.

The increasing number of companies with a global workforce also increases the need for training. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce in its “Summary Estimates for Multinational Companies: Employment, Sales, and Capital Expenditures for 2010” news release, worldwide employment by U.S. multinational companies (MNCs) increased 0.5 percent in 2010 to 34 million workers, with increases in both the U.S. and abroad.

The eLearning market is growing as well—worldwide. Global Industry Analysts, Inc. reports in a news release introducing its 2012 Distance Learning Industry Market Report that the global eLearning market will surge globally, reaching $107 billion by 2015. This spurred by the drive towards acquisition of additional skills and technological advancements.

Despite current economic challenges, senior executives continue to invest in developing their employees and understand that a highly skilled workforce is a strategic differentiator. Data from more than 400 organizations across all major industries demonstrate that learning and development is critical to drive growth and sustain a competitive advantage.

*ASTD 2011 State of the Industry Report*
Training and Development in Today’s Organization

To remain relevant in the marketplace, organizations must deliver training programs that keep a global workforce actively engaged and provide continuous learning to drive business results and sustain competitive advantage. And they must do this in an uncertain and rapidly changing business climate where budget cuts and travel reduction mandates are the norm.

At the same time, organizations are recognizing that simply delivering training is no longer sufficient. Training and development programs must address the needs of a new generation of employees—connected learners—who are comfortable with technology and multitasking, move seamlessly between physical and virtual environments, and like a balance of structure and autonomy.

Today’s savvy organizations should consider the following learning and collaboration strategy:

• Create an engaging, interactive multi-media environment that promotes greater learning
• Facilitate collaboration and social learning with opportunities to share ideas and information
• Provide repository of organizational knowledge available company-wide to enable self-directed, social, and experiential learning
• Offer anywhere, anytime connectivity, including access on mobile devices and tablets, that reduces the cost of travel, lodging, and time away from job

These requirements are re-architecting organizational education, which today may blend traditional in-person elements with online learning, both self-paced and real time, or be delivered entirely in a live, virtual classroom. It may be based on “learning by doing” projects that prepare learners to navigate their professional lives in an interconnected, always-on world. And it may fall anywhere on the continuum from formal, structured classes and employee development to in-the-moment, informal problem-solving sessions and ad hoc meetings.

In this environment, corporate trainers and other learning practitioners require a solution that will help them meet the needs of their entire organization—not just employees—but customers and partners as well. Plus, this solution must enable real-time, online learning and collaboration in ways that are engaging, personal, and meaningful to today’s organizations.

Marc J. Rosenberg
What Lies Beyond E-Learning?
March 15, 2006
Why Synchronous Learning and Collaboration is Important

- **Cutting Costs.** For every organization, regardless of industry, location, size, or revenue, cost containment in an uncertain economy is mission critical, and training is often one of the first areas to be affected. With a synchronous solution, organizations can leverage limited training resources and reach employees wherever they are without costly travel and related expenses.

- **Increasing Productivity and Employee Retention.** Time is indeed money. Aside from the obvious travel costs, which include the transportation, lodging and meals, training can also require time away from the office and result in loss of productivity. A synchronous learning solution will help reduce time away from job and decrease turnover by better meeting the expectations and needs of employees.

- **Improving Knowledge Transfer and Information Sharing.** All organizations have similar needs regarding the onboarding and departure of employees, especially as a growing number of baby boomers approach retirement age. A collaboration solution will help transfer the knowledge of seasoned veterans to new employees or new account teams as ownership changes and from one executive to another.

- **Connecting a Global Workforce.** Gone are the days when an entire organization would be located in the same city, let alone country. A collaboration solution built for learning will help organizations of all sizes, from small companies to large enterprises and government agencies, to effectively and efficiently train and communicate with their geographically dispersed employees.

- **Expediting Onboarding Process.** For some organizations, onboarding doesn’t extend beyond first-day orientation. For others, it’s a long, cumbersome, and expensive process. What’s needed is a best-practices approach that provides new hires with opportunities for formal and informal training and access to critical organizational knowledge from their first day and beyond.

- **Providing Just-in-Time Training.** As the speed of business increases, so must the pace of training. This increases the need for on-demand training and ad-hoc collaboration, along with a repository of organizational knowledge that is available company wide. Today’s workforce requires an environment of continuous learning with opportunities for anywhere, anytime re-skilling and up-skilling.

- **Facilitating Leadership Development.** There is no better way to plan for tomorrow than to accelerate the development of future leaders. But one-off leadership training is not enough when it comes to developing high-potential employees. A continuous online leadership training program can incorporate networking, mentoring and coaching, along with more formal instruction.

- **Training Beyond the Workforce.** Many organizations leverage external resources, such as contractors, resellers and partners, to help conduct their business. And product training is critical to customer satisfaction and can be an added source of revenue. What’s needed is a solution that allows all stakeholders to receive the training they need in a convenient and timely fashion.
Beyond Basic Web Conferencing

There are a number of core components that are part of any good collaborative online learning platform. These are the fundamental, largely generic capabilities that make online training and collaboration possible. These basic capabilities include the following:

- **Multiple-communications mechanisms:** VoIP, audio teleconference, multi-point video, instant messaging, and chat
- **Ability to incorporate live, multi-party audio and video**
- **Rich content use,** including Microsoft Office applications, multi-media, and web-based tours
- **Application and desktop sharing with remote control**
- **Web page sharing and guided web tours**
- **Tools for interactivity,** such as whiteboards, surveys, polling
- **Participant awareness** (knowledge of who’s online and ready to collaborate)
- **Controlled access,** restricted to legitimate participants
- **Ability to record and archive training sessions with on-demand playback**

While comprehensive collaboration platforms have all of these capabilities, not all products built for simple web conferencing do. Conferencing systems were typically built for simple meetings that involve presenting PowerPoint slides and talking about them. Even though there may be some opportunities for interaction—such as asking a question through a formal mechanism or chat—conferencing products were not built for true engagement. Attempts to retro-fit them for the demands of online learning and collaboration may result in systems that don’t feel organic, are cumbersome to use, and don’t provide trainers with the robust teaching aids and moderation controls they need.

Blackboard Collaborate’s long experience in online learning and collaboration strongly suggests that while the basics are necessary, they prove insufficient to carry out training and development in today’s organizations. This mission requires that online learning must not be just “good enough,” but must be first-rate and yield the same, if not better, engagement, satisfaction, and educational outcomes experienced in a traditional, face-to-face environment. Think web conferencing reimagined—and reinvented.

“Following a decade in which corporate training introduced often alienating self-learning modules from which workers drop[ped] out at alarming rates, virtual teaming restores and extends collaboration, giving personnel the chance to interact with each other in engaged, project-based classes. Virtual teaming is a giant step ahead in eLearning and a promising leap beyond on-site, instructor-led classrooms.”

Virtual Team Learning
Robert Ubell
August 15, 2010
Blackboard Collaborate: Built for Organizational Training and Development

The Blackboard Collaborate™ platform is the only solution designed for training and education that supports a wide spectrum of collaboration, enabling organizations, learners, and trainers to communicate, interact, and truly engage with each other. Platform components include the following:

- **Web conferencing**: virtual classroom instruction, moderator-led meetings, structured collaboration, employee development
- **Mobile collaboration**: participation in live training or meetings via mobile devices and tablets
- **Enterprise instant messaging**: fast information sharing, informal meetings and collaboration
- **Voice authoring**: enriched engagement by adding voice instruction to asynchronous elements of online learning
- **LMS integration**: seamless integration with Blackboard Learn
- **Professional Services**: aligning people, process, and technology to facilitate client success

Unlike products built for solely for informational meetings or webinars, Blackboard Collaborate is built specifically for training and education. Through its work with thousands of training and educational organizations over the years, and the “in-house” knowledge that comes from staff members who are experienced educators, Blackboard understands that a collaboration solution that’s used in a training environment must:

- Be designed for organization training and collaboration with the potential for rapid ROI
- Provide easy-to-use, reliable online collaboration technology that engages with rich media
- Enable same (or better) level of interaction and capabilities as face-to-face meeting and training
- Facilitate participative learning and allow flexibility for both formal and informal training and collaboration
- Be convenient for the learner, allowing them to participate anywhere, anytime on desktop, laptop, mobile device, or tablet
- Decrease costs, improve employee productivity and organizational performance, capture knowledge for re-use, and drive business results
- Provide seamless access to learning through third-party services, such as Blackboard Learn
Conclusion
Today’s workplace is global, highly-competitive, and technologically driven, and organizations recognize that technology is no longer separate from learning. Replacing or augmenting the traditional training classroom and asynchronous self-paced courses with a vibrant, engaging, and highly accessible virtual environment is a critical component of organizational success.

About Blackboard
Blackboard Inc. is a global leader in enterprise technology and innovative solutions that improve the experience of millions of students and learners around the world every day. Blackboard’s solutions allow thousands of corporate, government, professional, higher education, and K-12 organizations to extend teaching and learning online, facilitate commerce and security, and collaborate more effectively with their constituents.

To learn more about the only collaboration platform built for training and education, visit blackboardcollaborate.com, contact collaboratesales@blackboard.com, or try our solution free for 30 days at bbcollaborate.com/try.

WHY BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE?
• Focus on training and education
• Learner-centric design philosophy
• Flexible, multi-use solution
• Multi-platform, low-bandwidth support
• Participation from mobile devices and tablets
• Scalable to the extended enterprise
• Rapid return on investment
• Deep integration with Blackboard Learn
• APIs for integration with LMS, portal, applications
• Security, proven reliability
• Expertise, resources, support
• Accessibility for all learners
As a trainer in the high-tech industry, I find the Blackboard Collaborate platform a great way to host my online training. The breakout rooms allow me to assist my attendees in completing their hands-on exercises, making it a truly interactive session. I receive the published recording URL within minutes after ending my training session, allowing me to quickly follow up with my customers.

Kindra Reid
Education Manager
Genius.com