

When It Comes to Employee Training, Faster is Always Better

By Frank Lonergan, Ancile

Employee training is a key component to workforce production and an organization's overall success. After all, this training helps to decrease knowledge gaps and, in turn, produces a greater ROI. But, why should businesses invest in *faster* training for their workforces?

The world's top businesses are no longer committed to the old-fashioned model of apprenticeship, but instead are looking to implement new learning technologies that will onboard workers *more efficiently* and *in less time*. According to a recent study by Skillssoft, 42 percent of CEOs believe that the length of training or learning course is a more important deciding factor than its content. Ninety percent of these executives also plan to increase their training budgets next year.

Faster training is imperative for HR managers not only looking to relay vital company policies in less time, but for those aiming to onboard new employees in a way that is cohesive, convenient and financially beneficial for their businesses. A global IDC study reveals that "one out of every 10 dollars in the IT budget is dedicated to mobile ERP solutions," reaffirming the importance of learning mobility in the workplace. Future training solutions must be agile in order to adapt to the ongoing evolution of the learning paradigm, which has begun to transition from PC to mobile. With faster training solutions that are both mobile and accessible, businesses can create concise and compelling content that cuts down on time, while providing workers with the flexibility to consume critical information, whether in the office or on-the-go.

The following are key reasons why your business should consider faster workforce training:

Revenue Budget Savings and Additional Time Allotment

Revenue and budget savings are at the core of every executive meeting and financial planning discussion. Chief executive officers are now tasked with finding effective ways to increase the revenue of their businesses, while adopting new efficiencies to cut back on employee hours and meet quarterly budgets.

According to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), U.S. firms spend about \$1,067 per employee to provide employees with an average of 32 hours of training programs annually – about 2.7 percent of the entire staffing budget. This is a major concern for CEOs looking to decrease their staffing budget and diminish the amount of hours spent away from the workplace.

By implementing cloud-based software that produces agile and compelling courses, i.e., tablet, smartphone or PC accessible, businesses can reallocate the amount of hours spent for training toward more productive tasks, *and* can greatly

diminish the revenue reserved for staffing budgets! These excess funds can then be used towards other internal programs.

Additionally, agile and cloud-based training software provides global experts with an easy way to share their knowledge/expertise, without taking them away from their jobs. Businesses can also zero in on wider company goals, such as the optimization of employee retention.

Greater Employee Engagement

Believe it or not, less time in a training session allows for greater employee engagement. Workers who are not forced to spend 32-plus hours behind a computer have more time to interact with their co-workers and senior management, providing them with the opportunity to understand the company culture and overall goals of their departments.

A 2012 Gallup study shows that companies with world-class engagement have 3.9 times the earnings per share (EPS) growth rate compared with organizations at the bottom quartile. Ever heard of that saying, "A happy wife equals a happy life?" Well, in this case, a *happy worker equals better results*. A drastic decrease in the amount of hours spent in training gives workers more time to gain the hands-on experience needed to succeed in their level of business, no matter the industry.

By investing in new learning technologies that decrease the amount of time put into employee training, businesses can refocus their energies to better engage employees and increase retention rates. A MacLeod Report also notes, "If it is how the workforce performs that determines to a large extent whether companies or organizations succeed, then whether or not the workforce is positively encouraged to perform at its best should be a prime consideration." Additionally, businesses focusing on employee engagement are more likely to see lower absenteeism, turnover and error rates and produce employees with an overall better understanding of their company and customer's needs.

More Time for Staffers to be Productive, Absorb Useful Learning Experiences

Faster training results in a faster start. Human Resources training programs should allow staffers to get started, and hit the ground running with the knowledge needed to succeed right away. This is key for businesses looking to meet quarterly revenue goals and cut back on unnecessary spending.

The implementation of mobile training solutions can increase worker productivity and enable learning on the go. IDC's global study shows that the future focus will be "aimed at integrating mobility to create value." The study points to the fact that mobility is no longer an IT project, but instead "a strategic business development and transformation investment." In fact, businesses are estimated to substantially increase their investments in devices such as smartphones (35 percent) and tablets (30 percent) in 2013 to help improve employee efficiency.

The best training solutions should utilize the new learning curve with mobility and faster comprehension, allowing workers to focus on the bigger picture of what they've been hired to do: their jobs. The extensive requirements of outdated HR training programs affect the ability of workers to zero in on key assignments, hindering their performance and overall contribution to the company.

Shorter Courses that deliver Highly Relevant Information in Bit-Sized Pieces

As corporations increasingly rely on enterprise applications and related technologies, HR departments must ensure new employees are well-versed in the latest technological solutions, and properly trained to meet the needs of their departments. With learning paradigms constantly evolving from PC to mobile, today's training programs need to be more succinct and to the point than ever.

It's clear that we live in an age where the Internet, blogs, and social media have warped the way we consume and understand information. In order to properly train the future generation of workers, new training programs will not only have to deliver information in half the time, but deliver it in a way that is highly relevant, and consumable in bit-sized pieces.

The following are key traits to consider before implementing any new training program:

- **Clear, Concise and Compelling** – Consider these questions: Does your training program deliver important information in a way that is clearly relayed (no matter age or demographic)? Can this program be taken and completed in less than two hours? Are there images, video, graphics or insightful information that might intrigue trainees?
- **Mobility** – Future training programs will need to be completely cloud-based and accessible via desktop workstation, laptop, smartphone and tablet. Users will need to grab content from the Web and correspond with their co-workers, whether in the office or on-the-go, increasing remote productivity. The more mobile a program, the more productive a workforce will be.
- **Transparent and Adaptable** – The most effective training programs give HR managers insight into whom is accessing the content, how often and the specific types of content being accessed. With this information, businesses can detect the learning progress of their employees and send reminders to ensure that the necessary information is consumed.

Faster and More Effective Results for a Workforce and Overall Organization

Training costs may not be a top priority for CEOs, but it should matter for HR teams looking to set the standard in cost-effective learning with measurable ROI. After all, it's no secret that businesses investing in the training of their employees are proven to be more successful than those that do not.

A May 2012 study from IDC shows that "IT projects allocating more than six percent of the project budgets to training were significantly more successful than projects where three percent or less of the budget went to training." This number may even have the potential doubled to 12 percent if

faster training programs are administered within the allocated businesses.

Training – if done correctly – can provide organizations a real return on investments. However, programs that fail to be concise, clear, and compelling can lead to excessive costs and inefficiencies for the business.

Below are several facts to remember when deciding whether to invest in faster training:

- **Training prevents costly mistakes** – no "ifs, ands, or buts" about it! With an integrated system, such as one for enterprise resource planning (ERP), a small mistake in one place can become very costly elsewhere, so the proper training can be the difference between the successful adoption of a user application or inactive deployment. The quicker a worker is trained, the quicker these types of mistakes can be prevented.
- **Undertrained workers are five times more expensive to support than trained workers.** The proper training ensures that users take full advantages of the applications they use, increasing ROI. By quickly training workers, businesses cut the excess revenue to support undertrained workers and deliver a greater return on investments in less amount of time.
- **Better performance and improved ROI** – According to *How's Your Return on People*, a study conducted by *Harvard Business Review*, companies that invested in their people performed better and improved shareholder return versus companies that did not invest in their staff. Therefore, HR managers should see agile training as an investment toward increased worker performance, customer satisfaction and prolonged success for the company.
- **Long-term commitment to training** – Training effectiveness dilutes over time as users and the application support workforce experience turnover and the business processes evolve. Organizations must make a real commitment to training – not only during implementation, but also in a support capacity post-implementation to ensure that knowledge flow and productivity continue, even after a program's life cycle. Adopting mobile and agile training solutions will combat the dilution of a program's effectiveness by providing HR managers with the ability to update and distribute content in real-time, always giving employees access to relevant content, no matter the location.

About the Author



As CEO, Frank Lonergan is responsible for setting the strategy direction and managing the business operations of ANCILE. He has over 25 years of experience in the ERP field. Prior to becoming the CEO at ANCILE, he was vice president of Product Development and Support for RWD Technologies, overseeing significant growth in the customer base, expansion of the customer base globally, and expansion of the product portfolio. Lonergan also spent 11 years at SAP as vice president of Education Business Development, where he was responsible for identifying and introducing education solutions. He can be reached at frank.lonergan@ancile.com.