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The Corporate Shift To Online Training

By Aarik Ames

Online Training, otherwise known as e-learning, is the newest wave of innovation in the corporate training environment. This approach to instruction is broadly defined as the delivery of remote training over the internet or a corporate intranet via a web browser (Alexander, 2001). However, authors tend to vary on what aspects of e-learning are crucial to proper implementation. Within HR consulting firms, the more contested necessities of a proper e-learning template are an easy to use interface, a design filled with rich media, and a personalized source of feedback for help and support. Nevertheless, what all e-learning developers seem to agree upon is that online training is the wave of the future that will set a new precedence for organizational training expectations.

A few years back, Genzyme Corporation, maker of health care products, found itself facing a challenge within its training department. With a growing work force of 3,200 scattered across 25 U.S. locations, it was struggling not only to develop training programs but also to find the time to bring people to corporate headquarters for formal classroom sessions (Dobbs, 2000). "Things [were] changing too fast," said Russ Campanello, Genzyme's vice president of human resources. "We had to schedule everybody months in advance in order to coordinate everything for people to come to Cambridge. But by the time they got here, their training needs had changed (Dobbs, 2000)."

This is a problem that is all too common within HR consulting. While many training needs might be addressed quite thoroughly in a classroom, workers simply do not have time to wait for formal training sessions to be designed and scheduled, much less block out days on end for travel and classes. This constitutes one of the foremost reasons why corporations are moving toward online training programs. With new training methods, not only can employees train from the convenience of their own office or cubicle, but often times they can do so from the convenience of their own home.

Although e-learning has been adopted by just a handful of Fortune 1,000 companies, those that have tapped into electronic training and instruction are praising its benefits, such as rapid delivery of content, student-progress monitoring, and cost savings (Alexander, 2001). Last year, corporations spent \$870 million on e-learning, according to International Data Corp. By 2010, IDC predicts e-learning will dwarf all other learning methods and capture 80 percent of the training market (Lorek, 2000).

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Increased potential for profitability is typically the driving force behind the switch to an e-learning based program. Cutting costs and being financially efficient have both become crucially important in a U.S. economy where downsizing and foreign competition have increased. As one would assume, training has become a part of those corporate cost-efficiency considerations. In general, Companies can expect to knock 50% to 60% off their training costs by using e-learning applications, thanks in part to reduced training time via Web-based delivery (Alexander, 2001). Other financial benefits include savings in travel costs, time spent on training, and cost of printed training materials. In addition, the costs of off-the-shelf e-learning courses that have been developed for general purposes are continually dropping as the broad base of corporate customers has increased.

Traditionally, if a training method needed to be adjusted, a line manager would have to document a particular need for staff development, and then submit a request to the training department. Then, trainers would evaluate the need and decide how it could best be addressed. Finally, they would design a course and later schedule classroom sessions to teach it (Dobbs, 2000). However, with new

technological training developments, an online programmer can simply manipulate their existing software to achieve the same results. Courses can be modified much more quickly, and changes can be implemented with the click of a button.

An additional time advantage of e-learning is its ability to consistently deliver the same training worldwide. Once the software for a particular program has been developed, it will convey the same information each time it is used. Therefore, a company is able to alleviate any inconsistencies in training and account for any human error in the information transfer process. For companies such as call centers where consistent responses are essential, this is a huge advantage.

The information available on cost and time efficiency both point to e-learning as being the most practical means of development in the long run. Therefore, why don't more corporations make the switch to online based education? The answer, it seems, is some corporations find the results of online programs lacking.

At a 2005 Online Learning conference in Los Angeles, a multitude of corporate representatives arrived with the same question: "Why is my online training program not successful with employees (Zielinski, 2006)?" Of the representatives at the conference, many were embarrassed to admit they had invested serious money to buy or build computer- and Web-delivered training courses only to find their people dropping out in big numbers (Zielinski, 2006). In short, employees were simply not completing the work.

To help better understand why employees were having such difficulties with completing their online coursework, Eric Parks, president of Ask International, conducted a study of online methodologies. Parks compared the findings of a dozen studies conducted by separate organizational units over two years, and then conducted follow-up interviews with respondents. He concluded that, when given a choice of five delivery options for learning about a new product, more than 90 percent of respondents chose instructor-led over online (Zielinski, 2006). When asked why they would prefer this method of instructional delivery, many respondents answered that they just preferred the classroom experience. "For them, the chance to get away from their regular work and to learn and network with peers was a

big perk. They'd dropped out largely because that perk had been taken away," Parks described (Zielinski, 2006).

In addition to the drastically high drop-out rates of online programs, researchers at Michigan State University released a study in March that shows on-site employee education programs offering "significantly" better results than online training programs. Economics professors Carl Liedholm and Byron Brown found that students in a virtual economics learning program fared far worse on examinations than their counterparts who took the same course in live classrooms (O'Connell, 2002). The study also found that while online courses are fine at teaching basic concepts, they are not as effective at developing complex skills. For instance, students could grasp basic economic skills like supply and demand, but they were unable to apply these concepts to advanced problem solving scenarios (O'Connell, 2002).

Researchers have also discovered that employees from non-technology backgrounds who were more accustomed to face-to-face interaction have had the biggest problem with online training classes. "They're used to classroom experience in high school and college, where they absorb material in a more hands-on way," said Liedholm (2000), "that's what you're missing in an e-learning environment." Since the majority of employers will need to hire classroom educated workers, keeping this same mode of instruction seems to be an effective means of education. The employees already know what to

expect of this experience, so no adjustment is needed and they are comfortable with the environment (Liedholm, 2000).

Ultimately, the research on training program results does not suggest that online courses be trashed, but they must be better utilized in order to achieve the same results as classroom instruction. We must synthesize the advantages of each of these approaches into an e-learning experience that will cater to the needs of our workforce. In order to do so, online instructors will need to better utilize streaming video and interactive software in order to make the online curriculum more compatible with the classroom experience. If implemented correctly, online learning has the potential to revolutionize the way the world looks at workplace training.

By Aarik Ames, Training and Development Manager for

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Online Degrees Can Charge Your Legal And Paralegal Careers

The Corporate Shift To Online Training

By Joyce Jackson

The need for trained legal professionals and paralegals is expected to grow faster than the national average for job growth within the next five years. Stiff competition is expected, making your decision to enter the legal profession a critical one. The online program you choose will be a crucial decision affecting the level of success you enjoy.

While paralegals and legal assistants once were trained on the job, employers today are increasingly depending upon employees who have already completed some type of formal legal education or training. That's why a legal or paralegal certification, degree or online degree is so important to your future success in the legal profession.

One of a paralegal's most important tasks is helping lawyers prepare for closings, hearings, trials, and corporate meetings. Your classes and online programs will teach you to investigate the facts of cases and ensure that all relevant information is considered. Colleges and online schools also will teach you critical skills such as preparing the legal arguments, drafting pleadings and motions to be filed with the court, obtaining affidavits, and assisting attorneys during trials.

Once you have earned your legal certification via an online legal degree, you will be able to find work in all types of organizations, but most are employed by law firms, corporate legal departments, and various government offices. Your degree program or online courses will prepare you for work in all areas of the law, including litigation, personal injury, corporate law, criminal law, employee benefits, intellectual property, labor law, bankruptcy, immigration, family law, and real estate.

Because computer use and technical knowledge has become essential to paralegal work, a well-rounded degree program or online program is critical. There are several ways to become a paralegal. Increasingly, employers prefer graduates of four-year paralegal programs or college graduates who have completed paralegal certificate or online paralegal training programs.

Over 800 formal paralegal training programs are offered by 4-year colleges and universities, law schools, community and junior colleges, business schools, and proprietary schools.

Paralegal programs include 2-year associate's degree programs, 4-year bachelor's degree programs, and certificate programs that take only a few months to complete. Many certificate programs only require a high school diploma or GED for admission, but they usually are designed for students who already hold an associate or baccalaureate degree. Your legal or paralegal education will prepare you for a rewarding and relaxed life. According to the National Association of Legal Assistants, paralegals had an average salary of \$38,000 in 2000.

Joyce Jackson writes, lectures and publishes helpful and easy to understand information for the online degree student. More comprehensive and simple tips are found on her website:

<http://www.theonlinedegreeguru.com>



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