



Computer Based Training Facilitates Optimum Operational Knowledge

Computer Based Training (CBT) is here to stay and for good reasons. Research shows it is gaining popularity in the corporate realm and companies are spending more of their earmarked training dollars on cutting-edge learning technology.

Are we witnessing a paradigm shift?

Industrial psychologists say we are. One reason being cited is that more and more senior executives are viewing *e-learning* as a strategic tool that will help them develop and maintain their competitive edge. Furthermore, these savvy executives include training in their overall strategic business plan to stay ahead of the curve. Statistics show corporations that align CBT programs with strategic goals achieve those goals 80 percent of the time.

These executives also hire educators who think like business people and consider the company's long-term business goals and their role in achieving them. So what are the key deliverables when developing CBT training programs? Cost effectiveness, efficacy, and knowledge retention.

Cost Effectiveness

Studies show the companies that have implemented CBT immediately experienced:

- *reduced costs for travel, freeing up time and distance constraints*
- *reduced costs for human resources overhead (including scheduling challenges and overtime)*
- *reduced costs for regulatory compliance and customer support*
- *reduced employee time off the job*

Because CBT provides convenient access from home and work, it allows educators and students to better manage business, travel and family responsibilities. That may be another reason why companies that have implemented CBT eventually report increased employee performance impacting profitability in a positive manner. They also report greater return on investment (ROI) results provided accurate measuring systems are in place and relevant metrics have been established.

In a sample case study, an Atlanta company needed to train 2,000 employees on OSHA guidelines. Typically, when traditional classroom-based instruction was utilized, the training required 6 hours. The employees were mostly shift workers, so the training sessions were held more than once a day (requiring the instructor to be there) before or after a shift. This created 12,000 hours of overtime at a rate of 17.50. Factoring in the consultant/educator fees as well moves this number even higher, exceeding several hundred thousand dollars.

When the company switched to CBT, the training time was reduced to just two hours, effecting a reduction of 8,000 hours of overtime coupled with improved understanding and retention. This produced a savings of \$140,000 per year, in addition to savings that result from no longer having to supply lunch, snacks or beverages for 2,000 people.

Efficacy

A recent poll found that more than 1/3 of all CEOs view shortages of key skills in their workforce as a major challenge. Computer Based Training programs take into account that people have different learning styles, that they learn at different speeds and that they create their own meaning when learning something new. CBT can address the particular skills people need to do their jobs proficiently.

When it comes to retraining employees or bringing in new hires, studies show CBT can cut in half the time spent required for them to achieve proficiency with the tasks being taught. One example is a 1999 study from Motorola Corporation in which every dollar spent on training led to \$30 in production gains within three years.

Knowledge Retention

How do people achieve proficiency? It's not in last minute cramming sessions, according to the experts. It also doesn't appear to be in traditional courses or workshops. The Institute for Research and Learning reports that courses and workshops account for less than 20 percent of the learning taking place in a corporation. Besides, they say the average student forgets half of what he or she learns in a workshop if it is not applied within two days. On the other hand, research shows students learn faster and retain 50% more of the material with CBT. Learning accomplished with this methodology combines hands-on instruction with a consistently accurate delivery of the training matter.

It is only when live lecture-based training is put to use in the workplace that its effectiveness can be actively observed. Often, trainers must simply assume their material is working because there is no verification system in place. Interactive CBT that employs return demonstration features consistently tracks the comprehension and retention of the subject matter as training proceeds. Its easily measurable and repeatable nature is a unique factor of computer based training that is difficult to reproduce in the live training environment.

Conclusion

For those who have not yet employed Computer Based Training in the workplace, there are certain points that deserve serious consideration, such as the obvious cost savings from reducing or eliminating travel, increasing productivity, and eliminating hefty consulting fees. Add to that list the ability of today's cutting-edge learning resources to effectively deliver the content in a user friendly format and one can see that computer based training is an efficient solution to the corporate training dilemma. CBT is patient, is consistent, is accurate, is available; it is typically optimized for your environment, your needs as an organization and your employee's needs relative to their schedule.

References

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