MAINTAINING A LEARNING CULTURE THROUGH CHANGE









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INTRODUCTION

After the events of the past year, many organizations find themselves making difficult decisions about their leadership training. These decisions include training budgets, modalities, training topics and more. For many businesses, the most important question is whether or not to continue their training at all in the current climate. Business and economic outlooks are uncertain, but leadership development only becomes more essential during uncertain times. This e-book will not only make the case for continuing training, but also guide you in taking the steps necessary to plan for training with consideration for the difficulties that many organizations are facing.

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CONTINUING TRAINING IS VITAL







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WHAT DOES CHANGE LOOK LIKE?

Change management has been an important topic of leadership development since the beginning of leadership training. The events of 2020 proved the impact that being able to adapt to change can have on an organization facing dire, unpredictable circumstances. However, the way we think about "change" has expanded. In the past, when organizations considered change or change management, they were usually referring to internal change such as mergers, a new boss, an acquisition.

Now leaders and businesses are being challenged to think of change in more nebulous terms. The events of the past year are evidence that your organization, industry and the world can be flipped upside down in the span of a few months or even weeks. Not only do businesses change internally, but the world constantly changes around them, and those businesses cannot operate independently of these national or global shifts.



How training helps organizations respond to global events

The link between training and the way your leaders and organization handle global events may not always be immediately obvious. Consider the following types of training and how they help prepare your leaders for change.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

There may be times when national or global conflict, such as political unrest, can bring up differences of opinions between co-workers. Effective conflict management allows leaders to respond effectively to these difficult situations and potentially turn destructive conflict into constructive conflict.

DIVERSITY TRAINING

Current day conversations about racial justice have brought diversity training to the forefront. Diversity training can teach leaders to view situations from new perspectives, evaluate their biases and promote diversity and inclusion in all their communication.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TRAINING

Emotional Intelligence training can develop a base level of self-awareness and awareness of others' emotions that allow leaders to approach any situation with a more open mind. Even during a conflict, being empathetic, reading others' emotions and communicating intentionally can allow a leader to influence more effectively while making others feel heard.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Effective leadership training provides individuals at all levels of the organization with the ability to adapt to any situation. It also provides a basis for creating behavioral change of any kind. Leaders are at the core of creating a consistent company culture that values open-mindedness, constructive conflict management and emotional awareness.

WHAT DOES CHANGE LOOK LIKE?

In 2020, organizations were faced with long-term, external change—change that could not be resolved by a meeting or avoided. As a result, many organizations halted training altogether, and L&D departments saw budgets frozen or cut. Leaders and individual contributors continued to face new challenges as entire workforces became remote and people reevaluated the work they do and how they do it.

Beyond the immediate disruption COVID-19 caused around the world, businesses and individuals were faced with further external challenges in the form of political unrest, world-wide calls for racial justice and renewed mental health discussions because of these extreme circumstances. The lines between personal lives and professional lives blurred in many organizations, and leaders were challenged to demonstrate new levels of Emotional Intelligence and relationship behavior while having to maintain performance in a tumultuous economy.

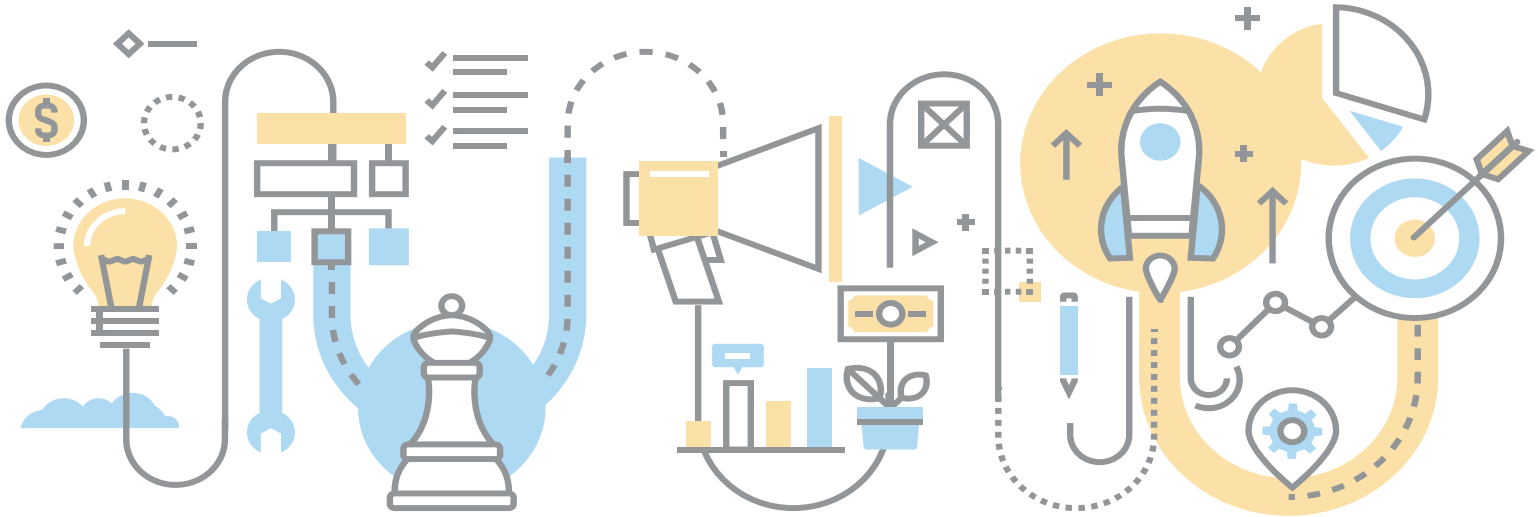
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ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCY

Throughout everything, businesses and individuals showed incredible resiliency. Some organizations decided to weather the storm, whereas others have made significant changes to adapt. Every business encounters unique challenges. While some organizations may be able to convert their workforce to become entirely remote, they still face the challenges of leading teams that are struggling with an entirely new way of working. Other organizations are presented with the challenges of providing employees with safe, socially distanced working conditions.

> *Highly versatile leaders are also skilled at adapting their leadership style to the needs of the situation.*
>
> ***READ MORE >>*** *Organizational Resiliency: A Function of Leadership Adaptability and Versatility*

Companies were forced to adapt at previously unimaginable rates to new landscapes and obstacles. Entire industries are reevaluating their products, platforms and services as the needs and expectations of their customers are drastically changing far beyond the usual scope of evolving client needs. Despite the challenges, many organizations have made huge leaps in innovation that they otherwise may have never accomplished in the same timeline. They discovered new opportunities to fulfill the new needs of consumers and created new streams of income that, in some cases, have saved their business.



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IS IT TOO LATE TO ADAPT?

For the organizations that decided to wait out the disruptive change by maintaining as many of their previous business practices as possible, adapting at this point may seem intimidating. However, it's not too late to enact change and adapt to the world's evolving demands. It is becoming increasingly clear that many of the changes we saw in 2020 are here to stay.

Remote work is likely to become a regular part of many organizations, especially as the way we view mental health at work and work-life balance continues to change. Society is also adapting to accept that change is constant and unpredictable. This will have a huge impact on how businesses and individuals make decisions, as many are looking for flexible solutions that can fit their needs in a wide variety of situations. The new realities presented in 2020—realities that will extend beyond the containment of COVID-19—present new leadership challenges that every organization should prepare their managers to face.

> *Frequent coaching targets for leaders are listening, empowering, collaborating and providing clear direction.*
>
> ***READ MORE >>*** *There Is Nothing "Soft" About Developing Leadership Skills: A Coaching Process That Works*

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IS IT TOO LATE TO ADAPT?

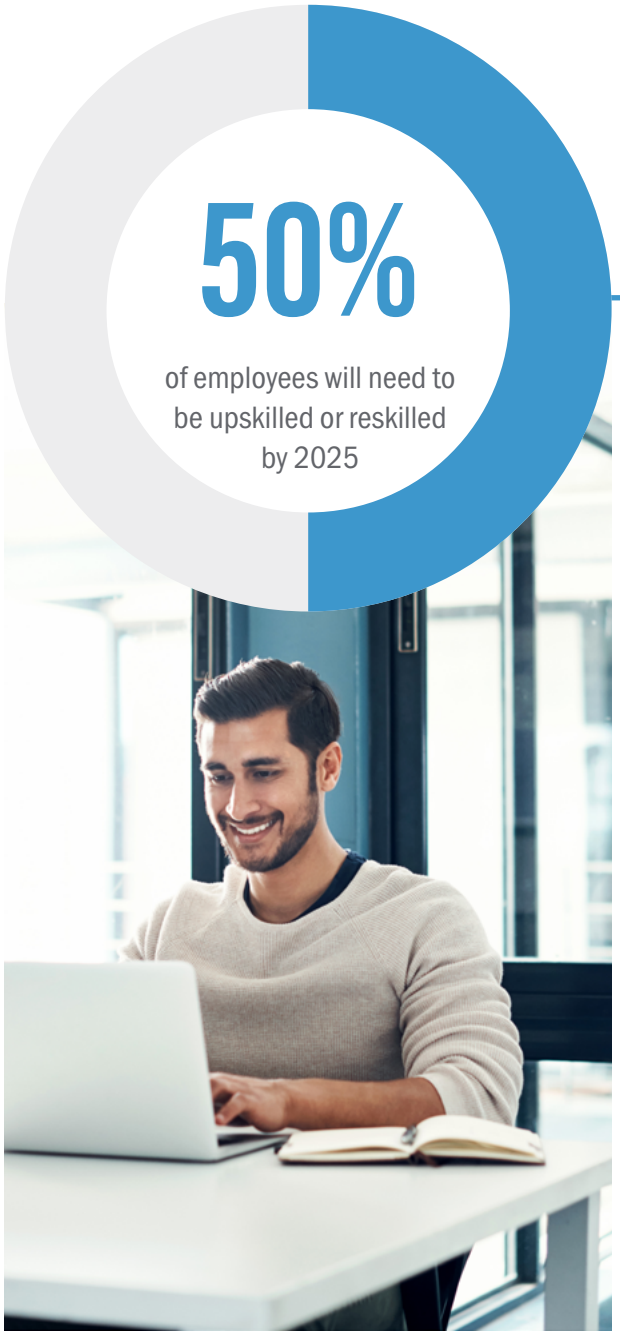
Leadership is more critical now than ever. In many instances, good leaders have been the difference in an organization surviving or collapsing. Regardless of how your leaders have performed in the past year, we cannot expect them to effectively face these continuously changing challenges without proper support. In 2020, leaders listed communication, collaboration and strategic thinking as some of the most critical soft skills lacking in leaders. Soft skills are of the utmost importance during times of disruptive change, when employees will look to their leaders for direction and support. Leaders need to find the delicate balance of supportive and directive behavior to drive results and maintain engagement. Putting leadership training on hold is not an option as a failure to lead can having devastating effects on an organization, including employee burnout, lack of engagement and poor decision-making.

How do soft skills affect your organization?

Soft skills are often overlooked or taken for granted, but it cannot be overstated the impact they can have especially during times of unrest. Consider how the application or lack of the following soft skills affected your organization in just the past year:

- COMMUNICATION
- STRESS MANAGEMENT
- DECISION-MAKING
- CRITICAL THINKING
- PROBLEM-SOLVING
- TIME MANAGEMENT
- COLLABORATION
- ADAPTABILITY

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IS IT TOO LATE TO ADAPT?

Beyond the leadership challenges brought about by COVID-19, there are inevitable changes to the workforce that began sweeping across industries well before the pandemic hit. Studies show that as many as 50% of employees will need to be upskilled or reskilled by 2025 due to automation and advancing technology. Many organizations experienced the impact of technical skill gaps within their organization as employees transitioned to remote work and were forced to be more technologically self-reliant.

Technological advancement and reskilling present huge challenges for both individual contributors and managers. As the nature of work changes, the soft-skills gap will only become more apparent. Social and emotional skills will be key in leaders preparing their direct reports to learn new skills and managing their performance. There may even be a dip in engagement for many employees reluctant to change, but if there is anything we can be sure of today, it's that change isn't going to stop. Your organization's leaders need to be equipped with the tools to face change and adapt in the moment.

TIP

Applying a universal leadership model across your organization can assist your leaders in every situation by giving them leadership guidelines that are effective under any circumstance. It can also create a common language of leadership that is understood at all levels of your organization.

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CONTINUING TRAINING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

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DECIDING WHAT TRAINING TO DELIVER

To support your leaders, your organization needs a plan to continue training even under the current circumstances. Deciding what training to deliver can provide you with a starting point to plan your training strategy. In the current environment, continuing training will likely require some sort of additional resource investment whether that is development time or money. Most organizations provided leadership training in the form of in-person instructor-led training (ILT). To abide by safety standards set by medical professionals, most training will need to be adapted either for a smaller classroom, for remote delivery or for online training.

Given the additional investment, it's important to carefully evaluate your training options and determine what is worth that investment. Consider the questions on the right.

REMINDER

Leadership is multidirectional—fostering leadership at every level of your organization empowers individuals to take control of their performance needs.



What skills gaps do you need to close with your leaders (e.g., leading remote teams, Emotional Intelligence, change management, remote performance evaluation)?



Which leaders currently need the most support at your organization: individual contributors, new managers, mid-level managers or executives?



Have your business' strategic goals changed due to the organization or industry shifts of 2020-21? Do your current courses align with those goals? If not, do you need to provide a new course to fill the gap?



Have your organization's cultural goals changed due to the events of 2020-21? Is your organization currently providing training to maintain or create this new company culture at all levels of the organization? If not, can you provide training that fosters those cultural goals?



How quickly do you need to be able to provide training? Are there some courses that would be easier or faster to adapt than others?

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PROVING THE VALUE IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING

For many organizations and L&D departments, tough budget decisions are at the crux of whether to continue leadership training. It can be difficult to provide stakeholders with hard numbers to prove ROI. However, when looking at the big picture, it becomes clear that providing leadership training is a key factor in succeeding during disruption. When considering industries and organizations across the globe, it is evident that strong leadership is often the difference between the organizations that fail and those that succeed.

How the benefits of leadership training translate to results

Knowing the benefits to leadership training is an important part of gaining buy-in; however, taking these abstract ideas to direct benefits to your organization improves the case for leadership training even further. Listed below are the known benefits to leadership training as well as the direct impact they may have on your organization's success:

Attracts and retains talent	Retaining top employees saves time and money by avoiding the costs of finding, hiring and training new employees.
Increases employee engagement	Engaged employees create better outcomes by increasing productivity and, as a result, profitability.
Builds leaders at every level of the organization	Equipping individuals with the skills to communicate their performance needs improves resiliency and independence. This is important when managers are dealing with competing priorities, giving them more time for strategic planning.
Improves adaptation during crises	Organizations that can adapt quickly and respond strategically are more likely to achieve lasting success during times of change. This may include finding new revenue streams and reducing costs.

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PROVING THE VALUE IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING

In many cases, organizations can't afford to not have leadership training. Investing in the future of your leaders is investing in the future of your organization, especially during the most difficult times. Consider the following tips to improve your chances of gaining stakeholder buy-in for your leadership training plans.

USE SUPPORTING DATA SPECIFIC TO YOUR LEADERSHIP TRAINING APPROACH.

Many leadership organizations provide case studies, success stories and data that can help you paint a picture for your stakeholder that shows the benefits of specific leadership training methods, sustainment, coaching and more.

CREATE A CLEAR CONNECTION BETWEEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS.

Alignment between your training and the goals of the organization are imperative for success. Showing stakeholders areas where leadership training will directly benefit organizational goals proves value.

ARTICULATE THE IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE.

You may not be able to provide exact numbers or statistics this early in the process, but creating a clear connection between your leadership training and the financial benefits it can have in your organization will strengthen your case for investing in training.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND TO STAKEHOLDER SUGGESTIONS.

You may not get immediate approval on your leadership development plan, but that doesn't mean you need to go back to the drawing board. Work with your stakeholders to find out where they see faults in your plan, and create a dialogue that allows you to adapt your training plan to their vision.

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CHOOSING A MODALITY

There are a lot of considerations that go into deciding which modality is the best fit for your course content and your organization. Consider the four major modalities below when deciding how to deliver training to your organization.



INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING (ILT)

- Typically consists of a facilitator presenting to a classroom and often includes in-person activities such as role-playing, discussion groups and group presentations
- Considered the tried-and-true method of leadership training for many organizations particularly when it comes to training soft skills
- Can be expensive and time-consuming given that you may need to organize for the learners to travel to a location and likely spend at least one full day away from their daily tasks depending on the course
- Some organizations may still be able to conduct a scaled-down version of their ILT training while following COVID-19 precautions—safety of your facilitator and learners is of the utmost importance so prepare accordingly

RESOURCE >> Facilitating In-Person Training: A Safety Field Guide



VIRTUAL INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING (VILT)

- Typically consists of a facilitator presenting to a virtual classroom over Zoom, Adobe Connect, WebEx or a comparable web-conferencing platform
- Sometimes a producer is also involved in managing the platform to ensure the course runs smoothly on a technical level
- Although there are no in-person interactions, many courses provide alternatives such as chat functionalities, breakout rooms, calling on participants and other platform-specific functionality that allows learners to engage with the facilitator and with each other
- Timing is more flexible than ILT given that people don't need to travel and courses can be more easily broken up across several days
- Requires some technical preparations from the facilitator and participants

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CHOOSING A MODALITY

ONLINE

- Usually consists of one or more e-learning modules containing video, audio and interactive activities to provide the same content as an in-person course but at the learner's convenience
- Has been an alternative to ILT for many years
- Many online courses are highly interactive, but there is less room for a back-and-forth dialogue since there is no facilitator
- Provides learners with a lot of flexibility since this training is self-paced and can often be accessed through different devices

BLENDED

- A blended course consists of multiple modalities
- Blended courses can utilize the benefits of multiple modalities as well as reduce some of the negatives of any particular modality
- Example: A blended VILT/online course could give the learners the flexibility of part of the course being self-paced but also the feedback and back-and-forth dialogue of a facilitator

Following up on online training

Given that online training is a solitary event, consider the following questions when structuring your online training to provide further support to your participants post-training:

? Does your organization have a way for online learners to ask questions and continue their investment in their training?

? Is their manager familiar with the course content?

? Will they know other individuals going through the same training?

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MATCHING YOUR CONTENT TO A MODALITY

It is essential to keep your course content front-of-mind when considering which modality to choose. Some content requires more discussion or raises more questions and might be better suited for ILT or VILT where learners can freely interact with an expert on the topic. Examples of this could include diversity training or Emotional Intelligence training that may involve thought-provoking discussions and require an extremely well-trained, considerate facilitator.

Other training may be more technical or benefit from repetitive practice. In this case, the self-paced nature of online training may be better suited to the course content. An example of this could be learning a new technical skill such as a programming language. Even soft skills can benefit from online learning given that e-learning courses can provide you with opportunities to learn through leadership simulations that you can revisit at any time.

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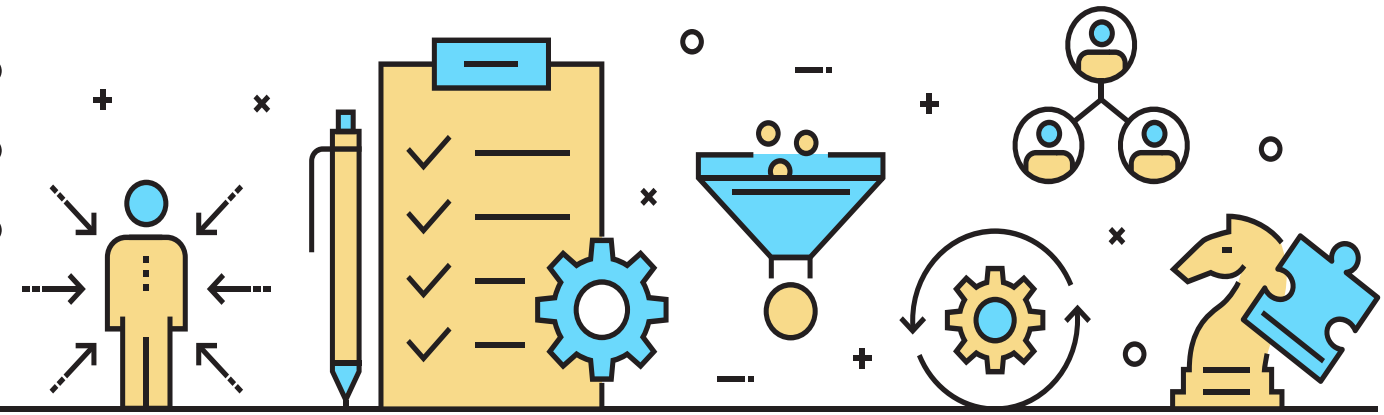
What is multimodality training?

Multimodality training is an emerging trend that consists of offering the same course content in multiple different modalities. Not to be confused with a blended course, which is one single experience made up of multiple modalities, multimodality training creates several unique experiences that achieve the same learning outcomes. It creates flexibility by allowing learners to choose the training that best suits their learning style and their schedule. It also provides your organization with increased flexibility in continuing training through change in the future by making your content available under a variety of circumstances.

KNOW YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Course content is just one piece of the modality puzzle—another necessary consideration is your participants. It's crucial to remember that each learner or group of learners is unique, and not all learners retain information the same way. Some learners are more comfortable learning privately at their own pace, while other learners may need interaction with others to stay engaged.

If your learners have busy schedules and may not be able to block out the time necessary for an instructor-led course, flexibility may be a critical consideration. Although it would be impossible to accommodate every individual learner's preferences, if you do see a general pattern among your learners, taking these preferences into consideration could greatly improve engagement during the training.

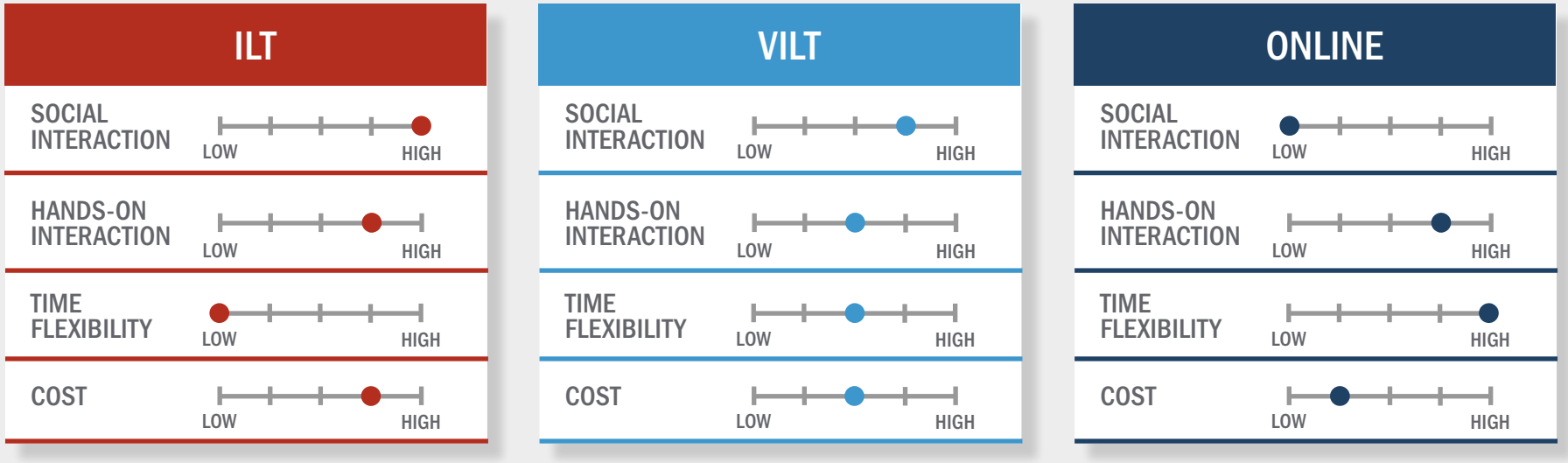


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LIMITING FACTORS

Although it is important to use whatever modality best fits your content and learner, you must also be aware of your organization's training limitations. Timelines, budgets and participant schedules can have a huge effect on which modality you choose. For example, if you need the training to be ready quickly and have a relatively small budget, you may find that converting an ILT course to VILT is a more viable route than developing an entirely new blended course. Taking time on this early step of the process is a pivotal part of ensuring that the training you deliver is practical and impactful.

At-a-glance modality factors



For the purposes of this e-book, we will be working off the assumption that most organizations are bringing back training remotely at first. Even if that is not the case, the advice in the following sections can certainly be applied to ILT; however, most specific references will be referring to VILT and online training.

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ADAPTING EXISTING COURSES FOR REMOTE LEARNING

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GETTING STARTED

Many organizations find themselves in a position, due to timelines or budget limitations, where adapting an existing course for remote training is a more efficient method to get their training back on track rather than starting from scratch with their leadership training. Use the information from the previous section to identify the correct modality for your training, then evaluate the training experience from start to finish.

Consider the following questions to begin assessing the steps you will need to take beyond development of the course to make the training run smoothly:

Who needs to get involved to make this training work?

- If you are adapting a course from ILT to VILT how will you train your facilitator?
- Do you have an LMS administrator? What do they need to know to prepare for remote training?
- Do you need to inform any executives or managers or provide resources to enable them to have effective follow-up meetings with the participants after their training?

How will you communicate to your learners?

- Do your learners understand what their training will look like?
- How will you schedule the training sessions? Does your LMS sync with your learners' calendars?
- Do you need to do any technical training on new platforms to prepare learners for their sessions?
- Do your learners know how they can ask questions and raise concerns about any new training processes?

What technology do you need?

- Do you have all the platforms necessary to effectively conduct remote training? This could include an LMS, web-conferencing platforms, etc.
- Do your learners know how to use any new platforms involved in their training? If not, how will you provide them with instructions?
- If you are conducting VILT, does your facilitator have the necessary technology? This could include a good microphone, strong internet connection, multiple monitors, etc.

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MAINTAINING ALIGNMENT

When adapting a course, it's easy to get wrapped up in the details of modality changes, improving activities and updating content. However, it's essential to always keep the course objectives in the forefront. For example, if you need to update a role-play activity from an ILT course and change it to a video scenario for an online course, make sure that the core learning goals of that activity are met despite any interactivity changes that need to be made.

Tips for training alignment

1. Write down the course objectives and consider them in any changes made to the course.
2. Map the course goals to organizational goals to make sure that these are in alignment as well.
3. Provide opportunities early for stakeholders to review the course updates

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MAINTAINING ALIGNMENT

This is also a rare opportunity to evaluate your course and improve on any feedback you have received, historically, to improve the course. These could be visual updates to more modern branding or tweaking an activity that learners found confusing in previous training sessions. By taking the time to carefully consider course activities, design and core concepts, you can create a product that may even be better than the original.

> *Training is teaching or helping others to develop relevant skills. In many respects, it is the function within the organization that tethers vision and strategy to alignment and execution.*
>
> ***READ MORE >>*** *The Bond That Tethers Vision and Strategy to Alignment and Execution*

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INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

It is in these early stages of the planning process where you will have to decide whether to use internal or external resources to adapt your course. For many organizations, working with an outside partner is the correct choice due to tight timelines, lack of development expertise or competing priorities. However, if your organization is considering internal development given that it allows for more control of the design process and your developers possess an in-depth knowledge of your organization's training content, review the following checklist to ensure that your organization has everything it needs to successfully develop and deliver remote training.

Checklist for Internal Development of Remote Training

There are many factors that can impact the success of internal development of remote training. Use this checklist to get an idea of whether or not your organization is prepared to adapt your training content for remote delivery.

- ☐ Your internal design team is experienced in developing for the modality you have chosen for your training.
- ☐ Your team is experienced in facilitating for the modality you have chosen for your training.
- ☐ Your team is familiar with any new platforms used in this training and can develop the program with its capabilities in mind.
- ☐ Your team is able to provide clear instructions for learners and facilitators on how to use any new platforms used in this training.
- ☐ Your team has the time necessary to complete development to your organization's standards.
- ☐ Your team does not have competing priorities that will impede the development of this course and affect your training timeline.

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INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

If you left one or more of the boxes from the checklist unchecked, you may want to consider partnering with a training development provider to assist with the development and/or delivery of your content and ensure your remote training is impactful. Successfully adapting a program for remote training will greatly assist with future buy-in on new modalities or further training. Even though external development teams are not familiar with your organization's training content, the benefit of their knowledge and experience around the specific modality you've chosen may be the key to your program's success.

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Pros and cons of providing ILT virtually

Many organizations will be looking to make a quick transition by simply facilitating their current ILT course virtually with little or no changes. Although this may be an effective short-term solution for some organizations, it's important to be aware of the pros and cons of this approach.

PROS	CONS
Training will be available almost immediately.	Activities may need to be cut given that many ILT activities don't work in a virtual setting.
You can use existing supplemental materials (e.g., Participant Workbooks, handouts, Leader's Guides, etc.).	ILT facilitators may not be well-versed in using virtual platforms or engaging participants virtually.
Facilitators are already familiar with the course material and don't need to learn new timings or activities.	Long virtual sessions based on ILT agendas may be tiring for participants, causing them to lose focus.
	ROI may be lower than your ILT course or a course tailored for VILT due to lower engagement.

ADAPTING YOUR COURSE USING INTERNAL RESOURCES

If your organization decides to move forward with internal development, be intentional in the redesign and delivery of your course. Remember the strengths of the modality you've chosen and play toward those. For example, if you've decided to develop a VILT course, make sure you fully understand your web-conferencing platform's interactivity capabilities and utilize them to the fullest to encourage engagement.

Avoid the trap of feeling locked in by the content of the previous version of the course. Often, trying to force the content of one modality to fit into another modality can cause confusion and a lack of interactivity. In some instances, it may even be better to change a section of the course entirely to make it flow more naturally and maintain engagement. Remember that the goal is to meet the learning objectives of the course, not create a copy of every activity or interaction.

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ADAPTING YOUR COURSE USING INTERNAL RESOURCES

Though there are a lot of considerations that go into adapting a course for remote learning, we've simplified it into three core pillars that are integral to the success of your training.



ENGAGEMENT

Intentionally focusing on engagement is vital for remote training, especially for learners who are working from home. Learners training remotely may be tempted to check their messages and emails. To combat this, remote learning needs to be extremely engaging and more than anything—interactive. When working with virtual and online courses, it's also critical to remember that the technology you use is also a part of your learner's experience. Technology issues can be distracting and negatively impact a participant's experience of the course. Make sure learners are aware of how to use the learning platform and who they can contact about questions and problems.



FACILITATION

Making sure you have the right facilitator for a VILT or blended course can be the deciding factor of whether or not the session is a success. Facilitating remotely involves new challenges and requires the facilitator to be intimately familiar with the platform. Confidence is also more influential than ever for facilitators, even those still getting used to a new platform. A confident facilitator reassures learners, who are also new to remote learning, and gains buy-in from the participants.



ORGANIZATION

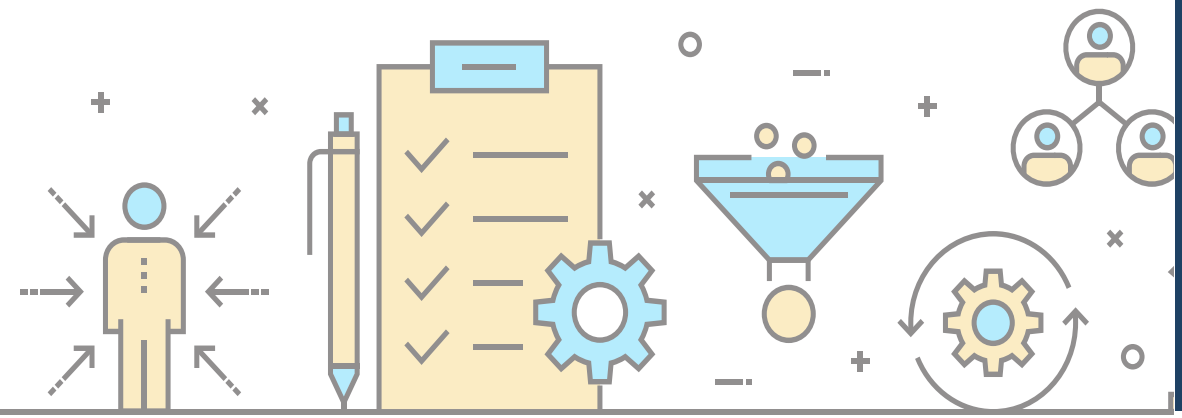
Don't overlook the organization of your program. Just because the program used to be an eight-hour, one-day course does not mean that it should follow that same structure in a virtual or online setting. Learners will likely not want to sit through a full day of unbroken remote training the way they might for ILT. Consider breaking your course into manageable segments or even using blended learning to allow for some self-paced training.

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PARTNERING WITH A VENDOR

Adapting to change often means asking for help. Knowing your organization's strengths and weaknesses is imperative, and a willingness to be open with a training partner has the potential to create something even greater than you or your training partner could have created individually. There are many training organizations with a wide range of experience in remote training that can convert your content to a new modality quickly and with excellent quality. However, there's a lot more that goes into a successful partnership beyond expertise.

You may have additional considerations specific to your organization, but taking the time to think through your needs and being open and honest with your vendor about those needs will create a stronger, more effective partnership.



Finding the right partner

Finding the right training development partner can be an intimidating task, but being aware of your organization's specific needs and how potential vendors might be able to meet those needs provides a good base for making this decision. Use the checklist below to assess whether or not a potential vendor will be able to meet your organization's needs.

- ☐ This partner fills the necessary roles for this project (e.g., e-learning developer, instructional designer, facilitator, video producer, etc.).
- ☐ This partner is experienced in the modality you've chosen.
- ☐ This partner has experience creating remote content that is interactive and engaging.
- ☐ This partner can provide you and your learners with the necessary technological support you need to be able to deliver the course smoothly.

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Four keys to a successful partnership

There are several keys to a successful partnership beyond selecting the right partner. Coming to common understandings on several points early in the process can help ensure smooth communication and more accurate planning. Review the list below to assist in creating an effective partnership.

1. Make sure you and your partner are on the same page about your organization's responsibilities (e.g., feedback responsibilities, any current course materials you need to provide, communication with learners, etc.).
2. Put a review process in place where an SME from your organization can review the course content to make sure the updated course remains in alignment with your training objectives.
3. Ensure that you will get the level of support you need from the vendor throughout the process, not just through design, to match your level of expertise.
4. Make sure you and your training partner are on the same page about delivery of the product to the learner. This may include supporting you in getting your e-learning modules set up on your LMS, setting up your virtual sessions or even providing a facilitator or producer for virtual sessions.

PARTNERING WITH A VENDOR

Partnering with the right training development provider can result in a remote training program that may even be better than your standard training experience. The world of training development has evolved rapidly to face the challenges of the past year, and there are many organizations capable of providing your organization with unique, cutting-edge training that your organization may want to continue well after current social-distancing restrictions.

> *Custom development is about creating meaningful, actionable learning so your provider should have extensive experience working within your specific industry and with global learners, from the front line to the C-suite.*
>
> ***READ MORE >>*** *Three Key Criteria for Choosing the Right Custom Learning Partner*

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DEVELOPING NEW COURSES TO MEET MODERN CHALLENGES

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THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

For many organizations, the leadership training they once provided simply doesn't align with their new goals and challenges. As organizations change their products and services, their work practices or even their core organizational values, many L&D professionals find themselves going back to the drawing board with their development plans. In these cases, it may be time to think outside of the box of your organization's past leadership training. Even if your organization has a standard leadership model they follow, you may want to consider how you can incorporate modern training trends in your leaders' development journies to prepare them for modern challenges.

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TRAINING TREND 1: SELF-MASTERY

Self-mastery is a topic on many professionals' minds. Working from home provided learners with a new level of autonomy and with that came increased responsibilities to manage one's own productivity. People sought out courses on time management, stress management, improving productivity and more.

There were also increased conversations around mental health as employees dealt with the stress of a pandemic, increased childcare responsibilities, economic struggles, political turmoil and calls for racial justice all while trying to maintain engagement and productivity at work. In response, leaders are having discussions with their direct reports that require new levels of Emotional Intelligence.

This trend also works as a reminder that development, even leadership development, doesn't always need to be focused on vertical movement. Self-improvement, particularly self-improvement driven by the individual, can increase engagement and provide a sense of empowerment even during times of great change. Organizations saw individuals demonstrating leadership in different forms at all levels of the organization to face seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Ideas for incorporating self-mastery into your leadership training

- Include Emotional Intelligence training in your curriculum.
- Provide leadership development training at all levels of the organization, including individual contributors.
- Provide opportunities for learners to forge their own development paths. You can do this by utilizing platforms like Udemy, LinkedIn Learning or Coursera.

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TRAINING TREND 2: MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS

Leaders are still grappling with the unique challenges of managing remote teams, particularly in evaluating performance. Managers are seeking out how to establish KPIs and better understand employee performance without in-person interactions. For many, translating relationship behavior to a virtual setting feels unnatural, especially when virtual meetings, emails and communication platforms like Microsoft Teams, Slack and Monday cut out a lot of the small talk that forms those relationships and builds referent power. Leaders need to know how to influence their direct reports to improve performance without in-person meetings.

For many organizations, remote work is likely to remain a part of their work practices beyond COVID-19. If this is the case for your organization, preparing your leaders for long-term management of remote teams is even more vital. Many leaders scrambled to make things work and keep their teams productive in the short-term, but intentionality in your leadership development is key for maintaining engagement, retaining talent and developing employees.

> *Effectively influencing others and driving behavior change is essential for rapid adjustment at a time when responsive leadership is more critical than ever.*

READ MORE >> *The Remote Manager Handbook: How to Manage Others and Maintain Engagement*

Three C's of managing remote teams

CLARITY Without the frequent check-ins that are commonplace in an office environment, individuals can experience performance slippage and not communicate their performance needs to their manager. It's a manager's responsibility to be proactive in providing their team with all the information and support they need to be successful and avoid regression.

COMMUNICATION Maintaining frequent communication with a remote workforce isn't easy, but it is necessary. To combat the inherent disadvantages of communication while working remotely, managers need to be flexible, engaged and accessible.

CONSISTENCY Managers must maintain the performance of their teams by establishing a routine and being aware of their direct reports' individual needs. In times of major change, individual contributors will look to their manager for consistency and guidance.

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TRAINING TREND 3: COLLABORATION

Remote work has made collaboration a priority. Communication skills are often taken for granted, but learners are seeking out courses on effective communication in the form of listening skills, business communication, conflict management, interpersonal feedback and more. It's managers' responsibility to be aligned with their organization's communication methods and standards and to model them to their direct reports. Setting clear expectations for your leaders during training can ensure that all employees have a more positive experience with their manager and team members by creating a standard of communication that can be applied across the organization.

In response to the global events of the past year, leaders are also being more mindful of their biases and seeking out information about diversity and inclusion. Open, intentional communication is a key factor in fostering an equitable workplace. Creating an environment where employees feel comfortable in approaching their manager with concerns, knowing that their manager will listen to them with an open mind can bring issues to light that may have otherwise remained in an organization's blind spot. Leadership training can provide opportunities for an ongoing dialogue that continuously challenge your leaders to question their biases and strive to improve inclusion.

Three ways leadership training can improve collaboration

1. Can be used to establish same-page status on organizational and team goals, allowing individuals to know what they are working toward and enabling them to make decisions aligned to those goals
2. Improves leaders' ability to communicate effectively, giving their direct reports a better understanding of what is expected of them and how they can contribute to organizational goals
3. Teaches leaders different ways of influencing others, e.g., for leaders who are used to relying on task direction without back-and-forth discussion, introducing them to collaborative leadership behaviors gives them entirely new capabilities

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SETTING L&D GOALS

The top goals of L&D departments in 2020 included closing the skills gap, driving organizational growth and improving employee engagement. Some organizations are continuing these goals into 2021 and beyond, but many organizations are rethinking their leadership development plans entirely. Use the following steps to get started on developing a new leadership development plan by defining your objectives and creating a path to meet those objectives.

STEP 1 Identify L&D objectives that align with your organization's goals. You could brainstorm these by listing out your organization's goals and looking for gaps in your leaders' current abilities to meet those goals.

STEP 2 Plan initiatives to reach those goals. Each initiative could be its own training session or could be a training topic under which there are a variety of courses.

STEP 3 Decide how you will deliver this training to your learners. Consider whether your learners will still be remote and how that may affect your training plan.

STEP 4 Identify indicators of success by which you will measure whether you met your objectives. The specific indicators of success may vary greatly depending on your L&D objectives, but some ways of measuring these could include ongoing coaching sessions with a leadership development expert, evaluations by a next-level manager or assessments included in your training sessions.

STEP 5 Organize your initiatives into a timeline and review to ensure that you have a path to meeting all your L&D objectives.

Although every organization's L&D objectives and plans will have varying levels of complexity. Following these steps can get you started in creating that development map that gets your organization from point A to point B.

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PROVIDING FLEXIBLE TRAINING







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PREPARING PLAN B

If there's anything that organizations learned in the past year, it's that no plan—including your training plan—is certain. It may seem counterintuitive to set goals and plans for leadership development training after a year like 2020 where many organization's training plans were thrown off course. However, there are lessons that can be taken from those experiences to create leadership development plans that are more resilient to change. Your organization's training plan should be concrete enough that you know you can stick to it but flexible enough to withstand change.

Flexibility through multimodality training

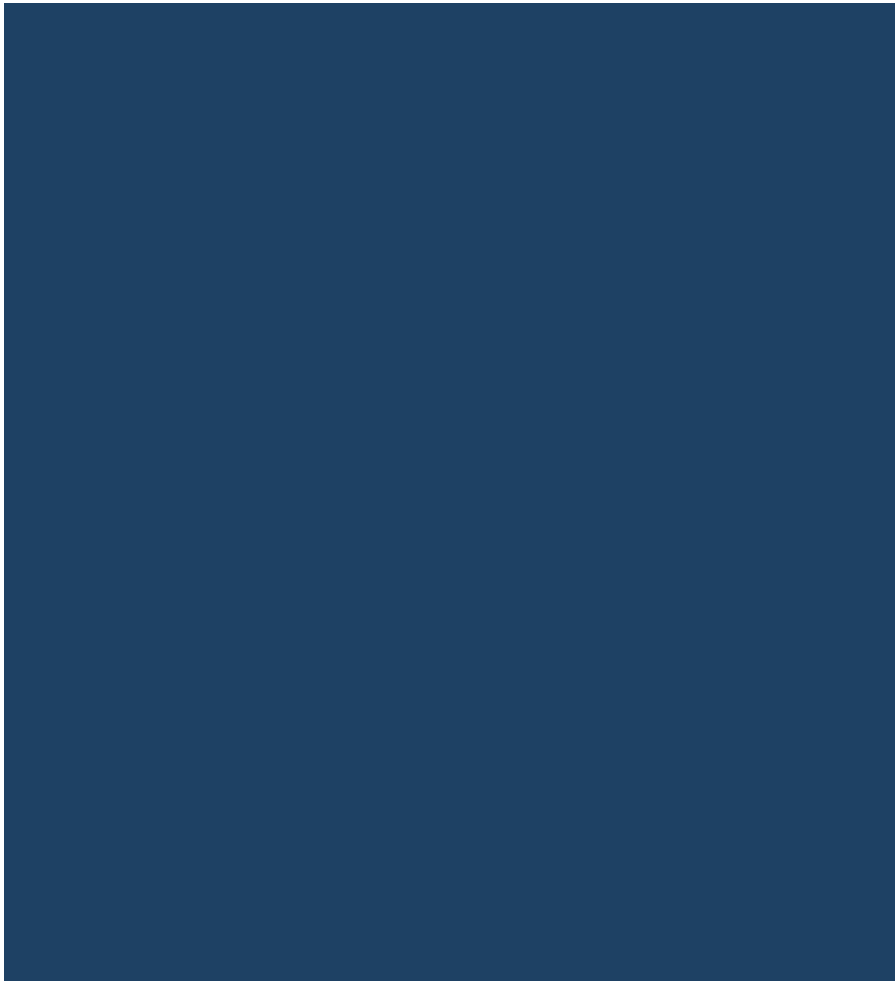
Multimodality courses provide a built-in Plan B for your training sessions. For example, if you had to cancel a virtual training session, you could easily provide your learners with online modules instead.

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PREPARING PLAN B

We all have our idea of the perfect training session, and, hopefully, with a carefully thought-out plan, that's exactly how your training will run. However, it's necessary to have a backup plan in case you hit a roadblock, particularly one that could derail your training entirely. Ask yourself the following questions to find an alternate way to deliver your training without losing the core learning objectives and start creating your Plan B.

- Do you have a backup modality for your training? For example, if you're preparing an ILT session, could you quickly convert your training for virtual delivery?
- Do you have a standard recording of your training that you could deliver to participants if their session got canceled? If not, can you make one?
- Do you have an individual who can provide one-on-one coaching over a video call to provide a learner with the key content that they would have learned in the course?
- Do you have a library of online training materials that you can use as a backup when in-person and virtual training are put on hold?
- Do you keep track of free training resources, such as webinars, that could be used to fill in training gaps when resources aren't available?



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PREPARING PLAN B

Plan B looks different for every organization and requires you to identify the most essential elements of your training. Often, it's also necessary to know what aspects of your training you are willing to let go of to salvage the training experience overall. Once you've decided what product piece your Plan B would look like, you will need to think through the entire training experience and what processes you need to put in place to ensure that Plan B can be employed smoothly even at the last minute.

Plan B preparedness checklist

Use this checklist to think through the training experience and fill in the gaps necessary to make your Plan B successful.

- ☐ Inform the facilitator and anyone else involved in the delivery of the training of what would be expected of them for Plan B.
- ☐ Prepare the technology necessary for your back-up plan (e.g., web-conferencing platforms, online modules, video libraries, etc.).
- ☐ Determine when and how will you communicate to your learners the new training plan.
- ☐ Prepare any new participant materials or participant instructions needed in advance.

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SETTING REMOTE TRAINING UP FOR SUCCESS

Common challenges for virtual training are scheduling and technology issues. Use the tips below to set your training up for success by creating training plans that are resilient to scheduling obstacles.



VILT

Virtual training can face several of the same challenges as ILT, especially for courses that require several hours of engagement. Consider the following tips to avoid scheduling issues and enable your training to run as smoothly as possible:

- Breaking virtual training into shorter sessions allows for more flexibility to divide the course into multiple days as needed.
- Depending on your organization's size, you may be able to offer multiple time slots for learners to choose from.
- Avoid last-minute scheduling surprises by making sure virtual sessions show up on learners' calendars; this can be done manually or can be automated by your LMS.



ONLINE

Online training is naturally more suited for busy, changing schedules since it is self-paced, but there are additional considerations that allow it to be even more flexible:

- Utilizing shorter-form online content allows learners to jump more easily in and out of training. This can be done by breaking a long course into several one- to two-hour sections.
- Online sustainment, such as microlearning, allows learners to get bite-sized pieces of content in between meetings without throwing off their day.

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SETTING REMOTE TRAINING UP FOR SUCCESS

Unexpected technology roadblocks can quickly throw a remote session off track for a participant or even the entire participant group. To avoid this, it's crucial to be aware of the technology issues common for online and virtual training to appropriately prepare for these training sessions. Use the tips below to create a training experience that is resilient to technology obstacles.

TIP: Make sure your learners know any technology adjustments they might need well before their session. This might include equipment or specific computer settings.

TIP: Make sure your participants know who to contact when they face technology issues.

TIP: Rigorously test any online modules and communicate issues to your in-house developers or training provider before delivering it to your learners.

TIP: If your organization or facilitator is new to virtual training, consider having a producer or second facilitator available for fielding technology issues so that the course doesn't get derailed.

TIP: For virtual training, ensure that your facilitator and producer are experts with their platform and provide them with any resources specific to navigating the course.

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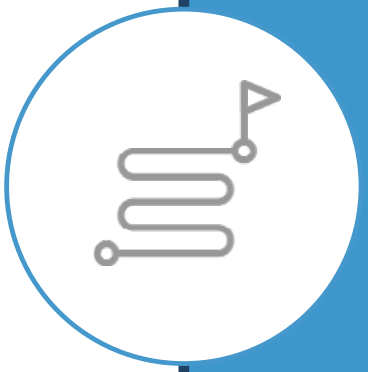
PROVIDE MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING

Despite any plans that you might put in place, sometimes a participant is simply not able to complete training within the given time, or they may not be in the right mindset to absorb the training. Leadership is not a one-time event, and leadership training shouldn't be either. Providing participants multiple opportunities for training not only allows them to be more successful in their development, but also fosters an environment where training and development are valued and encouraged.

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CONTINUOUS TRAINING





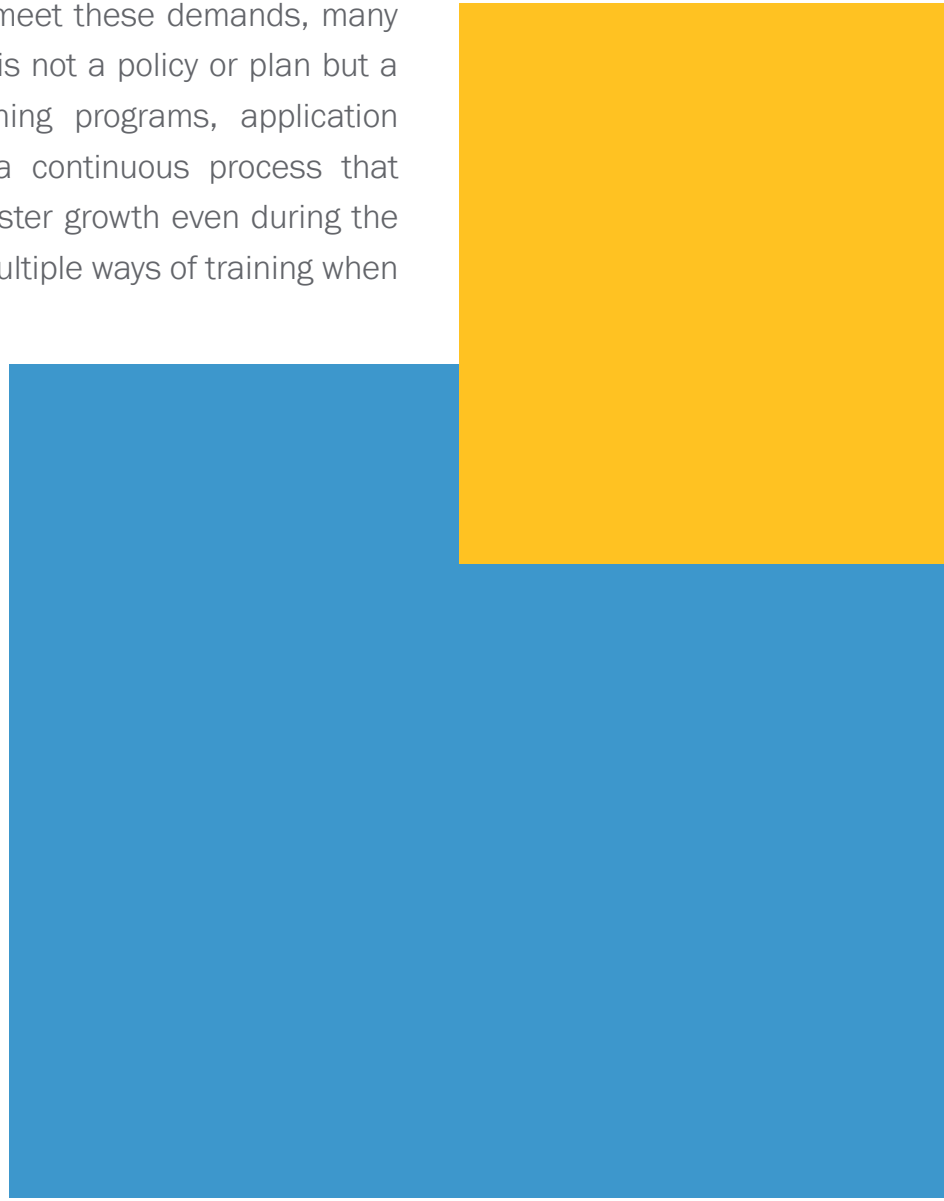


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TRAINING SHOULD BE CONTINUOUS

The demands of the modern workforce are constantly changing. To meet these demands, many organizations are turning to continuous training. Continuous training is not a policy or plan but a mindset. Leadership development is a continuous cycle of training programs, application opportunities, sustainment and more. By looking at training as a continuous process that doesn't start and end with the training session, organizations can foster growth even during the most challenging times. You can empower your leaders by providing multiple ways of training when possible, including microlearning, multiple modalities, coaching sessions and performance evaluations. Continuous training also allows training to be more flexible given that learners are less reliant on any specific program and can be confident that they will have several opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

Businesses will never be able to predict when the next world-shifting event on the scale of COVID-19 will happen again and disrupt the workplace with such magnitude, but preparing your leaders with continuous training will provide your organization with the skills and resiliency necessary to adapt. Thorough leadership training acts as another level of defense against chaos during times of change. If leaders know what is expected of them and can successfully communicate expectations to their direct reports, change becomes a lot less intimidating.



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The Four Moments of Truth™

Employing a training evaluation, such as the Four Moments of Truth™, is another way to continue training beyond a leadership development course. Review the Four Moments of Truth™ below and consider how they could be used in your organization to reinforce training.

1. **SAME-PAGE STATUS** happens one to two weeks before training, and it's where the Trainee and his or her Manager outline training expectations.

2. **MAXIMUM ENGAGEMENT** occurs during and immediately after the training. The Trainee actively engages with the training and completes a learning summary to define key takeaways.

3. **PERFECT PRACTICE** takes place one to two weeks after training. It is a coaching session between the Trainee and the Manager to decide on goals and action steps stemming from the training and determine how to measure progress toward those goals.

4. **PERFORMANCE SUPPORT** consists of longer-term, ongoing coaching and follow-up. The Trainee and Manager meet two to three months after training to assess progress toward goals and refine goals and action plans, as needed.

RESOURCE >> The Four Moments of Truth™

TRAINING SHOULD BE CONTINUOUS

Continuous training has many benefits to the organization, including improving creativity and innovation, creating alignment and necessitating continuous needs analyses. In addition, there are also many benefits for your leaders and individual contributors. In a time where upskilling and reskilling are constant needs, learners value the opportunity to improve skills and remain competitive. Ongoing opportunities for development improve engagement by helping employees discover their professional goals and empowering them to achieve them.



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TRAINING SHOULD BE CONTINUOUS

There are many reasons to employ continuous training in your organization. However, regardless of how often training is encouraged by L&D departments or even managers and CEO's, individuals will not truly feel that continuous training is a part of their organization's culture until it is modeled from the top-down. This starts with the organization's leaders. There will always be reasons to not engage with training, time being the most common excuse, but committing to continuous training means holding it as high of a priority as you hold your other responsibilities. If leaders prioritize their own training and encourage their direct reports to do the same, organizations can create a thriving culture of learning that engages individuals at all levels of the organization.



CONCLUSION

Leadership development is crucial in all organizations no matter what form it takes. Investing in leadership can be an investment in change management, Emotional Intelligence, managing remote teams and any number of skill sets that improve your organization's ability to adapt and innovate. With advancing technology and improved leadership development training, the possibilities for training remotely, flexibly and continuously are endless. Although you may not be able to predict the road ahead, getting your organization started on a path to establishing a plan for leadership development even while in the midst of great change will set your leaders up to better tackle the challenges they are sure to face. Leaders at every level of the organization are responsible for the innovation and resiliency shown across the globe over the past year. Use the lessons learned from this time to jump-start training that may have been put on hold. It is more vital now than ever to invest in your leaders.

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