

# 10 e-learning trends that enhance workforce performance



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Well before the coronavirus pandemic hit, the e-learning industry was already growing year-on-year. With businesses and academic institutions operating mostly remotely this year, digital learning has seen astonishing growth. Thanks to the advancements in modern-day technology, it was possible for organisations to react quickly to the major disruptions presented in 2020. However, a lot of organisations were stuck having to MacGyver their way into the digital learning space, which led to duct-taping together classroom-based training materials into an online experience that was far from satisfactory. This resulted in poor learner uptake with minimal knowledge acquisition or retention taking place.



Digital learning systems are evolving at a rapid rate, bringing out more value-added features daily, which allows for effective, interactive, and memorable learning experiences. It is essential to keep track of the latest technological advancements to keep on top of your learning and development initiatives, and to keep enhancing your training experiences. Here are 10 e-learning trends you should consider, seriously!

## 1. LaaS (Learning as a Service)

Learning as a Service is provided as an end-to-end managed solution that encompasses L&D services from an initial training audit, through to strategic analysis, implementation, evaluation, content development and even administrative support for a set monthly fee.

Organisational training needs are always constant, and learning interventions are necessary to keep staff competent and businesses profitable. Many organisations do not have the internal capacity needed to design, implement and manage multiple training solutions for multiple business units at the same time. The rapid and systemic changes in enterprise technology are pushing businesses to put more resources into training and skills development. The widening skills gap is a major topic of conversation, so we won't dwell on it here, but it is vital to note that many companies find themselves struggling to develop and retain professionals with the competencies needed in today's challenging business climate.

The LaaS model essentially allows for learning to take place at a fraction of a cost, unlocking far greater value from your existing training budget.

## 2. LXP (Learning experience platforms)

People no longer search training catalogues for courses the way they used to, so companies need to establish ways to train their staff “in the flow of work.” An LXP is a learner-centric, socially enabled environment that provides a personalised gateway to an organisation’s aggregated learning content through a familiar “Netflix style” searchable interface. LXP systems have a key set of capabilities: they place the learner at the centre which means training is no longer a top down driven process. Learners take control of their own learning pathways. Learning experience platforms focus on delivering a highly contextual and personalised learner experience.

### **3. Mobile learning**

Mobile is the face of digital, and mobile learning has matured with a steady increase in adoption, especially with the modern learner. With the intrinsic strength of ‘anytime, anywhere’ access for learners, it comes as no surprise that it is now seen as the future of learning. It provides control to the learners with the advantage of flexibility and it is accessible to all learners within their workflow. Learners get access to content at the moment of need. If you couple solid mobile learning content with knowledge retention strategies, it is a really powerful method for knowledge transfer to take place.

### **4. Employee engagement**

Do you know what is learning’s worst enemy? Boredom! Where boredom wins, learning fails. Unless you find a way to present training materials in an engaging and entertaining way (edutainment) and capture the learner’s attention while conveying the main point of the topic, boredom always wins. You need to consider the dynamics of learning styles and deliver content using the most appropriate instructional approach. Your training approach needs a mechanism to keep learners hooked. Game-based learning coupled with gamification, for example badges, leader boards and point systems, are a great way to stimulate employee engagement.

### **5. Content curation**

Content curation is an exercise to continually find, filter and share relevant content to your learners, allowing easy access to it all in one place. It allows anyone in your organisation to gather curated content, making contextual learning material available for everyone’s benefit.

Content curation will help your employees experience constant learning through forums, discussions, and chats for peer-to-peer collaboration. It is a great stimulator for your learning ecosystem. It drives social learning and will help inspire a culture of learning. Long content development lead times, high content development costs and time-consuming updates to training materials are all reasons why you should already be curating content.

### **6. Personalisation and adaptive learning**

Personalisation is about targeting individuals, addressing their needs, providing the right training materials, and introducing training interventions at the right time. The instructor designs the critical objectives of a training programme by defining the relationship between the learning outcomes and their most effective order. This content then adapts to the learner, based on a series of predefined inputs and rules which provides a ‘just-in-time’ learning experience. Algorithms detect learner needs and present personalised recommendations. The key point here is to recognise an individual’s competency levels and adjust to meet them with the most appropriate training intervention, driven by AI and data.

### **7. Immersive technology**

Immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) have the potential to boost learning mediums visually, kinaesthetically, and of course audibly. AR and VR provide an immersive e-learning experience.

From architecture, through human anatomy to zoology, immersive technology can be used to improve learning in a variety of industries. For example, health and safety training can utilise VR to show health hazards and highlight dangers in certain workplace scenarios. Some of the immersive authoring tool providers like Adobe and Amazon are releasing affordable solutions, and it is becoming faster to produce. I see further traction on these solutions as they become more affordable. In my opinion, we will see a much wider adoption of AR-based training, especially on mobile.

## **8. Video-based learning**

As a result of the pandemic, most learning around the world in 2020 was carried out by video lectures, virtual classrooms, and web conferencing tools like Zoom. With the proliferation of mobile devices, the roll-out of 5G networks, rapid video creation tools, and declining data costs, video-based learning is the dominant trend. Video should always be your 'go to' option.

## **9. Artificial intelligence**

AI can facilitate the creation of highly personalised learning pathways by analysing the data it collects. This data can then be used to understand the learner's interest, proficiency, and competencies. It can recommend further learning materials based on an individual's knowledge gaps; gaps that are sometimes unnoticed even by the learners or trainers themselves. Potentially, personalised learning will not only engage the employee better but also help L&D teams gain greater impact. Essentially, AI takes a much broader set of training variables and is able to quickly turn this data into personalised learning paths.

## **10. Proctoring**

Proctoring is AI-enabled remote invigilation that allows students to write a test online in any location, at any time, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment. Students must confirm their identity and are monitored through the webcam and microphones on their device. AI is then used to flag any irregular student behaviour, and prevents the opening of new tabs and any sort of plagiarism etc. This will ensure the validity and integrity of your examination. The software eliminates human error, bias, and much of the expense associated with verification and venue-based exams. Fortunately, accredited summative assessments have been approved by various SETA's and other governing institutions like the CAA.

In conclusion, we find ourselves in a world of constant disruption. Trends are continually shifting in the e-learning industry. Use the information in this article to help you stay on top of things so you can make the most of your organisation's learning and development efforts.

ABOUT MICHAEL HANLY

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