Achieving Organizational Agility through Just-In-Time Training

Summary

Your people need skills – and they need them yesterday to stay ahead of your competition. You only want to train them once, so retention is as important as speed. What do you do?

The world is changing at an exponential rate and it's pivotal that organizations keep pace with those changes in order to remain competitive and profitable in today's knowledge-based economy. An agile organization is achieved through agility of its workforce – which in turn is achieved by agile training solutions.

In this challenging environment, technology-based Just-In-Time Training (JITT), first flagged in Meister's book "The 2020 Workplace", is finally coming into its own, providing significant benefits to forward-thinking businesses.

Modern JITT's foundation in effective eTraining provides a significantly more comprehensive and contemporary solution. Ultimately, less valuable employee time is spent in learning activities, and knowledge retention is substantially-improved as learnings are immediately consolidated though real-world application.

This paper discusses the key training options available to businesses, considerations when evaluating a JITT solution, and the business case for taking a JITT approach.

Just-In-Case Vs. Just-In-Time Training

Constant change is the new dynamic of the global economy, making agility more necessary than ever … Agility is something that requires planning and a full incorporation in business and management processes.[1]

Organizations need to implement a comprehensive learning strategy incorporating agile training solutions; quick, interactive training solutions to keep their workforce up-to-date with technology and skills, and to respond quickly and efficiently to the changing business conditions around them.

Traditional Just-In-Time Training (JITT) has tended to be a set of written instructions, but for the modern, high-tech, geographically-diverse workforce, that just isn't sufficient any more. Technology and associated tasks are changing at a rate of knots, and paper-based solutions simply can't keep pace.

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[1] Faisal Hoque, *The Speed of Business Today*

> *To respond to changes in their environment, firms must facilitate learning from various processes. This learning must operate at different levels and within different areas of the firm and should be based on recurrent sense-and-respond cycles.[2]*

A number of Fortune 500 companies have started their own universities – think McDonald's "Hamburger University" and the aptly-named Deloitte University – to provide a more responsive and highly-customised solution than available through the usual tertiary education channels.

But building your own university isn't necessarily financially viable for a majority of businesses, and sometimes employees need to acquire skills more urgently than a traditional training course allows.

> *"What companies like is just-in-time learning that gives somebody a skill they need at the time they need it. What traditional universities do to a large extent is just-in-case learning."[3]*

In-Person Training

The least agile option available, traditional in-person training methods tend to be slow to respond to organizational and technological changes, and have limited effectiveness. In addition, a custom course may take months to develop and then weeks to implement, as trainers travel around the country to deliver in-person training to groups of people in geographically dispersed offices.

Productivity is reduced during the training delivery, and if it's not timed to align with exactly when they will need the new skills, knowledge retention is poor. In fact, although researchers are yet to settle on an agreed figure, it's estimated that up to 90% of learned information is forgotten within a month, with a majority of that information lost in the first couple of days.[4]

Alternatively, if it's too late after the skills were initially needed, workarounds and informal learnings may already being in place that render the training session redundant. Not to mention that it can be extremely expensive, with trainer salaries, travel expenses and lost productivity costs just to name a few.

eLearning

The next most popular solution, online or eLearning, has been around for many years, and although generally more timely and more cost-effective, the overall ROI of standard online courses tends to be less than desired. Aside from the overwhelmingly passive text- and video-only approach, training located on corporate networks forces employees to use corporate resources and time to complete the training – an additional business expense. It also limits learners' ability to access the information as needed on-the-spot, a major concern for employees in field or mobile roles and a significant stumbling block in achieving true agility.

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[2] Faisal Hoque, *The Speed of Business Today*
[3] Christopher Connell, *Tired of Waiting, Employers Provide Just-in-Time-Education*
[4] Carol Leaman, *Learning Continuum: The Missing Link*

Custom Development

Out-of-the-box training solutions may be quick to implement, but lack the customization necessary for truly effective training. Your learners may learn how to use the software, but do they understand the surrounding workflows and process that make it an effective tool in your organization? The best solutions enable not only rapid roll out, but rapid custom course creation too.

Just In Time Training

Just-In-Time Training (JITT) is the key to training agility, as its use of modern technology allows for rapid implementation and quick, measurable results.

> *People learn well and fast when they need to learn—when they encounter specific skill or knowledge gaps that prevent them from completing a task or achieving a desired tangible result. If a training tool anticipates the learner's real-world skill and knowledge gaps and makes the right information easily available to fill those gaps as needed, it's just in time.*[5]

Three characteristics in particular make JITT an effective approach in building an agile workforce[6]:

- The learner is in control of what and when they need to learn.
- Training can be accessed whenever and wherever it's needed.
- Content is directly related to the task at hand.

When these three qualities are combined in a comprehensive solution, alongside solid instructional design and educational psychology, knowledge retention is also improved, making the JITT solution not only timely, but effective – minimizing employee downtime and overall costs.

Evaluating a Tech-Based JITT Solution

So how do you know what solution to choose for your business? There are some questions you should be asking as you go through the evaluation process. Doing these early on will make for a more streamlined implementation, broader adoption and improved – measurable – return on your investment.

Rapid Rollout

How quickly can you roll out your JITT solution across your workforce? Look for a solution provider that has an extensive library of existing course material, and the functionality to quickly and easily integrate custom elements. How will corporate knowledge be captured from your organization's subject-matter experts – will this require additional investment in tools and training to use the tools?

Example: Global eTraining (GeT) has thousands of hours of existing software and professional skills courses available immediately. With its drag-and-drop interface and proven effective course templates,

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[5] Bruce Tulgan, *Learning Just In Time*
[6] Margaret Riel, *Education in the 21st Century: Just-in-Time Learning or Learning Communities*

The Generator knowledge capture and content authoring tool makes developing custom components quick and easy.

Learning, eLearning and mLearning,

Is the training accessible when the learners need it – wherever they are? Look for a solution that is built on HTML5, as it's the only way to ensure that it will be fully functional on any web-enabled device: laptops, tablets and even smartphones. If you're looking to develop custom content, ensure that the authoring tools are also HTML5-based so that the unique corporate knowledge of your subject-matter experts can be captured wherever they are.

Courses developed on other (largely proprietary) platforms may not function adequately when mobile platforms are upgraded (which happens several times per year).[7] HTML5 is device-agnostic - it works in any modern web browser – making operating system upgrades irrelevant to its functionality.

Example: Built in HTML5, Global eTraining courses and the content authoring tool, The Generator, can be accessed on any web-enabled device connected to the internet – in an office or on a remote construction site.

The Right Knowledge

Is the training easy to navigate? How easily can learners pinpoint the specific pieces of information they need? Look for a solution with 'chunked' information, where learners can easily locate specific pieces of information and learn them thoroughly as needed – maximising knowledge retention as well as time management.[8]

Example: GeT's closed-loop learning model means that topic modules are self-contained, and all learning styles are catered for within each module. Combined with the comprehensive course library, learners can pinpoint and access the exact piece of learning they need, exactly when and where they need it.

Effective Learning Methodology

A robust educational psychology and instructional design basis is as fundamental to JITT success as the technology. In the online learning sector in particular, there are many providers with excellent technical credentials for course development, but no formal educational foundation or experience. Does your selected provider have educational psychologists and instructional designers on their payroll? Can they provide evidence of successful educational outcomes, rather than just successful delivery of educational technology?

Example: GeT's courses – and The Generator custom course templates – are built on almost 30 years' educational experience using the best in educational psychology and instructional design. The GeT Interactive learning methodology won 'Best Corporate/Workforce Development Solution' at the 2014

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[7] Dan Keckan, *Mobile Learning War Heating Up – eLearning Authoring Tool Review*
[8] Maureen Murphy, *Improving Learner Reaction, Learning Score and Knowledge Retention through the Chunking Process in Corporate Training*

SIIA CODiE Awards. The Generator is also the winner of the 2014 Canadian Awards for Training Excellence, as well as of the 2014Brandon Hall Excellence Award, receiving Gold in the Best Advance in Content Authoring Technology category.

Customizable

Your organization was not built using a cookie-cutter – organizational culture and corporate knowledge are unique to your business. Look for flexibility in JITT implementations. In addition to the core technical training resources, are there tools to capture corporate knowledge without taking subject-matter experts off their projects for extended periods of time? Do the tools allow for course development of a comparable quality to the existing eTraining?

Example: GeT's The Generator needs no training to use, allowing for rapid knowledge capture and custom content authoring. Using the same proven course templates and GeT Interactive learning methodology as the Global eTraining library of existing courses, they provide an experience consistent with technical training courses, and quality educational outcomes.

ROI and Reporting

To evaluate the effectiveness of your training investment, your solution should have robust reporting facilities, and LMS integration. Reporting is key to evaluating ROI, and provides indicators for when rapid changes may be required, holding true to the nature of a genuinely agile organization.

Example: Global eTraining's technical platform provides comprehensive reporting tools for both existing and custom courses, as well as native integration with Absorb LMS, and custom integration for other LMS.

Support

If you need help with rollout or technical issues, where can you find assistance? If you need to discuss custom implementation issues, is there an experienced eTraining associate you can contact? Do you want the support of the same person each time you call?

Example: Global eTraining provides comprehensive support, wherever your organization is across the globe, with access to eTraining specialists available to maximise rollout effectiveness.

Plan for the Future

Technology is changing at a rate of knots, and technical training solutions need to keep up. Software upgrades are no longer released on an annual calendar – they are constant, released monthly, weekly, and even daily for some platforms. Ask your solutions provider about the regularity of course revisions and updates to reflect these changes. And how easy is it for you to review and update your custom material to respond to changing business conditions?

Example: Global eTraining works closely with companies such as Autodesk and Wiley to ensure course content is always current with the most recent software upgrades as soon after release as possible. Courses developed using The Generator can be easily updated as needed.

Benefits

There are a number of benefits to JITT that are especially visible in comparison to traditional training options.

- Onboard new staff faster, support rapid role and priority changes more effectively
  - New staff don't need to wait until the next scheduled onboarding courses are held, and they don't need to spend a week sitting at their desk watching hours of prepared online videos before they can start doing their job. With JITT, they can start work almost immediately, dipping in and out of training courses as the need arises.
- Keep existing staff up-to-date
  - Make upskilling a part of every day without removing staff from their duties. JITT allows them to slip learning into their daily schedule to maximise engagement, retention and efficiency.
- Minimise training expenses and maximise retention by only providing what's necessary when it's needed
  - Why develop a day-long training course, and then pay trainers to deliver it repeatedly when different staff may only need to know different elements? And if they're not going to use it straight away, they'll probably forget most of it within days. JITT can help by enabling staff to access only the information they need at the time they need it, minimising downtime, and maximising knowledge retention.
- Engage more effectively with millennial employees – no longer the workforce of the future
  - Millenials "want to learn skills in a nontraditional way, on their mobile devices and tablets," says Jeanne Meister, author of *The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today*. "Now the whole issue and conversation is about using social media for informal, continuous learning."[9]

Summary

> *Perhaps the greatest challenge business leaders face today is how to stay competitive amid constant turbulence and disruption.*[10]

Organizations need to implement a comprehensive learning strategy incorporating agile training solutions; quick, interactive training solutions to keep their workforce up-to-date with technology and skills, and to respond quickly and efficiently to the changing business conditions around them. Just-In-Time Training is the key to long term workforce agility, effectiveness and economic sustainability.

Work closely with your training partner to ensure that your training needs are met effectively and that your JITT solution truly enables the agile organization you're looking to build.

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[9] Christopher Connell, *Tired of Waiting, Employers Provide Just-in-Time-Education*
[10] John Kotter, *Accelerate!*

About Global eTraining

Global eTraining is an award-winning Canadian-based provider of comprehensive, integrated online learning solutions with over 25 years of experience in developing and delivering exceptional computer-based learning. We are a strategic training partner to some of the world's largest and most diverse multinational design, construction and software organizations, government bodies and educational institutions, and the global leader in developing and designing training for the 21st Century.

GeT Interactive courses are currently being delivered in 139 countries around the world, and the foundational learning methodology was named Best Corporate Learning/Workforce Development Solution in the 2014 SIIA CODiE Awards.

Learn skills faster. Retain knowledge longer. Apply to real-world projects better.

Call today for a free demo
1-877-414-0200

Further Reading

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