Time to MOOC Your Corporate Training (Aug 14)

Corporate MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) or online learning portals offer skill-based courses that act as self-paced and on-demand miniature sessions and workshops.

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When was the last time you spent five hours giving back-to-back presentations to new hires? Did you find yourself giving that same exact presentation to different employees three times in one week? Or have you ever sat through a presentation yourself and noticed your mind aimlessly drifting?

Let's be honest—whether you're presenting or in the audience—it's hard to engage people in a meaningful way with content for more than a few minutes, let alone several hours. Even listening to a speaker for one hour can leave people obsessively checking their e-mails instead of paying attention to the presentation.

But when employees do hit the holy grail of corporate presentations—a charismatic speaker and a compelling topic that interests them—how much of that information are they able to recall even a few minutes after the presentation is over? Unless they take organized notes, they're soon back at their desk without much to show for the hours they spent in the conference room.

Why Online?

These are just a few of the reasons corporate training is increasingly moving online:

- Corporate classroom learning can be painfully boring.
- It's hard to access relevant information when you need it most.
- Presentations almost always seem to take a long time, and you can't sacrifice a whole day for an in-person training session without feeling overwhelmed and unable to attend to your core job responsibilities.
- Traditional training approaches just don't work for the younger digital natives among us.
- There's also the problem of efficacy: Is classroom training really the most effective way of delivering information? Not necessarily.

In fact, a study by the SRI International for the U.S. Department of Education found that "on average, students in online learning conditions performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction."

The study's primary author, Barbara Means, an education psychologist with SRI International, notes: "The study's major significance lies in demonstrating that online learning today is not just better than nothing—it actually tends to be better than conventional instruction."

Why might this be? When learning is done at your own pace and you're in control of the content, you are more likely to feel engaged with the material and learn more. Not only do you learn better when you're in charge of your learning, but you get access to all the training materials in one specialized location. You can always refer back to unclear topics and revisit materials as you need them.

Younger generations in particular, such as digitally native Millennials, want a great deal of flexibility when it comes to learning tools and collaboration. They want to be able to access learning content wherever and whenever via their mobile devices.

Corporate MOOCs to the Rescue

Corporate MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) or online learning portals, like Udemy for Organizations, offer skill-based courses (such as leadership and communications skills, as well as Excel, and Facebook advertising skills) that act as self-paced and on-demand miniature sessions and workshops. Each course is segmented into bite-sized chunks where you can consume anywhere from three to 10 minutes of content at a time. Skip through content you already know and find exactly what you need. It's learning at your own pace, where and when it's convenient for you and on the platform of your choice (desktop and especially, mobile).

The kind of on-demand training that online courses provide means less time away from the normal workday. Have time during the day to watch training videos? That's great! But if you don't, you still can consume content at home or even on your commute. Waiting in line to get coffee? Tune in for five minutes while your mocha is made.

This is why a growing number of companies are moving to an online training model. Take Talintel, for instance. Talintel is a research organization focused on designing workforce development systems for the health-care and human services industry. The company works with health service providers to help reduce caregiver turnover and increase quality of care.

Talintel CEO Leo Petrini says: "On one hand, I was looking for an online training program that would allow us to more efficiently onboard employees and give our training team more flexibility with creating learning content. On the other hand, I needed a library of great courses I could bring to Talintel."

Like many other fast-growing companies, Talintel constantly is adding new hires to the team. For years, Petrini took on the task of training new employees on his own. "When you hire a new person, you suddenly have an entirely new job you didn't have the prior week. We decided one-on-one training just wasn't working anymore. We needed a better solution that would scale with us and be more effective."

To keep pace in quickly changing markets, employee training must enhance your employees' skills, not hinder your company's progress. Using MOOCs to move training online is a step in the right direction.

Dennis Yang is CEO of Udemy, an online learning marketplace, where 3 million students are taking courses in everything from programming to yoga to photography and more. Each of Udemy's 18,000-plus courses is taught by an expert instructor, and every course is available on-demand.

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