

Train for Success: 10 Components of Web-Based Training That Increase Profitability

When it's time to issue a purchase order, you demand a very clear understanding of your return on investment. Employee training is no different. A successful learning management system (LMS), when integrated properly, yields positive, long-term results; it should make your business more profitable. What does your organization expect from employee training?

- Expect your training process to make you money!
- Expect continuously improving profits, even during economic downturns.
- Expect your sales force to be more productive.
- Expect your operations to be more efficient.
- Expect Regulatory Compliance.
- Expect application to Quality Standards (i.e. ISO).
- Expect your business objectives to be met or exceeded.

If you are not achieving these measurable results, it's time to retool your training regime. This White Paper explores the successful use of integrating web-based training applications with your overall employee education process.

Meeting or exceeding your company's training expectations is achieved through implementing several techniques. Here are 10 proven training techniques that successful companies use to increase profitability.

1. **Make Your System Easy to Use – For Learners and Administrators.** Employees respond favorably to web-based training that is easy to use, relevant to their jobs and provides immediate and positive feedback. Even learners who have never operated a computer, or those with leaning difficulties, thrive using a quality LMS. A successful web-based LMS is easy for employees to access. A point and click application overcomes many perceptions of computer inadequacy among learners. Success is increased when courses are readily available through minimal steps. Once a course is opened, content is king. Information is presented at a variety of levels, depending on the intended audience (see #9 *Match Your LMS To Your Culture*). Course narratives and background music are available as well as narrated tests. Employees are given access to their training records and are typically conscientious in mastering their assigned curriculums. It is common for many employees to take elective courses far exceeding their job requirements. A LMS should be easy for administrators as well. Posting and managing data, keeping track of learners, and finding reports are all integral components of a solid LMS. Getting back to basics though,

when your employees improve their knowledge of the operation and learn better ways to accomplish their objectives, the efficiency of your business improves, leading to improved profitability.

2. **Maintain A Diverse Training Library.** A comprehensive, robust web-based learning management system allows you to build your training library from many different resources. You can buy editable, off the shelf modules written by subject matter experts while maintaining the option of converting your legacy training materials for web-based delivery. To get the best value, your library should contain offerings for every major department of your organization. The application selected to deliver safety and health training also provides a means to develop libraries for standard operating procedures (which optimally should be integrated anyway), employee benefits, ISO requirements, career management resources, etc. This enhances your ability to diversify human resources and ensures maximum operations efficiency, leading to improved profitability.
3. **Apply Your LMS to Quality and Regulatory Standards (ISO, OSHA etc.).** Education and training is more than a good investment, it is also often required. Good training and document control is essential in elevating the status of your organization. Most quality standards require comprehensive training and related documentation. If your company is ISO certified, or if you are seeking ISO or other quality certification, you'll want a powerful application that provides a means to host a wide range of content as well as instant access to a thorough record keeping system. While such recognition enhances your company's credibility, the right LMS also goes a long way in protecting you from EEOC complaints, OSHA or EPA violations, and other regulatory requirements. When employees receive continuous education and reinforcement, work safely, and increase overall mastery of their tasks, productivity improves, leading to improved profitability.
4. **Use a Blended Approach.** Complimenting traditional classroom and/or hands-on training with a web-based computer application can dramatically increase learner comprehension while minimizing downtime normally associated with stand-up training. For example, if you want your sales staff to learn improved communications skills, a web-based course can provide technical information such as attenuating skills (body language that shows the prospects that you're listening and that you care). These skills can then be practiced and demonstrated in an abbreviated classroom setting. This is accomplished by requiring learners to take the web-based portion prior to attending the class. This technique allows trainers to preview learners' test results and adjust classroom content, thereby maximizing the value of classroom time. This enables employees to increase productivity, leading to improved profitability.
5. **Manage Your Curriculum.** Logistics are often the greatest obstacles to employee training. Colleagues of computer-based training systems often feel as if they're in a live version of that old cartoon: Prospects are too busy fighting Huns with bows and arrows to talk to the salesman who has a machine gun. Managing your curriculum with a proven web-based system virtually eliminates 90% of the headaches associated with exclusive stand-up training. With a web-based application, content is scheduled, delivered and documented to multi-locations simultaneously or at the convenience of individual learners. For example, employees from New York receive the same content as employees from Ohio, Connecticut and Georgia. Learning tracts contain multi-disciplinary courses that apply to individuals or groups of learners. Courses and tracts for specific jobs can be scheduled over any given

time frame. Entire departments can be scheduled with a few clicks of the administrator's mouse. This allows your training staff to continuously improve content and keeps your workers working, leading to improved profitability.

6. **Quality Learning Incorporates Employee Involvement.** In many instances the majority of your training content is stored somewhere within your current resources. A good learning system is capable of providing a means to capture valuable experience and technical expertise from your current workforce, and disseminate that information to other people. This raises the aggregate knowledge base of your organization and ensures employee buy-in. Employees respond better to training specifically relating to *their* facility with *their* people providing information pertaining to *their* jobs. Inviting employees to participate in developing web-based training has several advantages. You have already paid for your knowledge base - use it. This methodology also gives employees an opportunity to contribute. Successfully facilitating employee contributions usually has a positive impact on employee satisfaction. Finally, no one knows your operations better than your employees. With a little guidance and positive reinforcement, your employees can teach others how to work more efficiently, leading to improved profitability.
7. **What Gets Measured Gets Done.** Make sure you get what you pay for. The best way to ensure value is to measure your expectations against results. A quality LMS contains reports that are easily attained, relevant and timely. First, you want to know how many employees are using the system and to what end. Test results for individuals are available as well as summary information. Summary information includes an overview of the organization's (or department's) performance. This information is essential for tracking and documenting quality standards such as ISO as well as regulatory requirements such as OSHA training. Second, use base-line performance measures, such as lost time injuries or production analysis, to evaluate the impact of your LMS. If your training is coordinated properly with well-drawn related procedures, your performance will improve. This of course leads to improved profitability.
8. **Utilize Training Content as an Information Database.** Once you have the information in your training library, it is accessible to employees when they need it. A comprehensive training library includes standard operating procedures, company policies, permit instructions, communication procedures, news items, frequently asked questions and more. Information is made available through any elective course that is on the system. Employees can be given access to information beyond their current scope of responsibility, thereby learning other areas of the organization. This also enables employees to review courses they might have taken 18 month ago, yet need the information now. Quick access to information reduces downtime and frustration and increases employee's ability to troubleshoot, attain knowledge and improve productivity, leading to improved profitability.
9. **Keep Information Current and Relevant.** Things change fast. In today's economy, successful companies set the pace. To be successful, organizations must streamline operations while implementing the best possible methods, technology and strategies. Continuous improvement is essential yet often appears to be a moving target. The optimal LMS drives the improvement process. Changes in production techniques, marketing strategies, or regulatory requirements are quickly integrated into the system. In many instances, updates are completed and learners review the revised course within a few hours. The right web-based system delivers timely content while the related administrative

functions, like curriculum management and record keeping, are automatic. This allows training personnel to stay ahead of the curve in researching and developing next generation courses that smoke your competition, leading to improved profitability.

10. **Match Your LMS To Your Culture.** Each organization has a unique culture (and usually several sub-cultures). Perhaps you have gone to great lengths to acquire and maintain a certain *look* or *feel* that is consistent within your organization. Your LMS should reflect your image. Seamless accessibility to your on-line training is established through Internet links. Employees can log on through your company web site or go directly to the system; it's your choice. The main point is that once they log on, they know it's *their* site. Courses are built with a variety of templates that ensure cultural compatibility. Several looks are often developed within the same company. For example, you can build a special theme just for the welders in your fabrication department, or for your Midwest Region. Even languages do not stymie a good LMS. If you operate with a bilingual workforce, you can develop bilingual courses. At some level, you might have employees who have learning disabilities or literacy limitations. This is very common and is resolved through the use of fully narrated courses and tests. The best learning management systems are adaptable to deliver training content to PhD's, skilled tradesmen, laborers, hotshot marketing professionals, or any other sub-groups within your organization. So even if your training needs are widely diversified, you can use one LMS to efficiently improve employee performance, leading to improved profitability.

The Galaxy LMS, Powered by ExxTend Learning meets all of these criteria. The administrative power of the Galaxy LMS is delivered via four major sub-applications:

- Company Management
- Learning Objectives
- Information
- Curriculum Management

Each major category is divided into subcategories that provide a robust learning system. For example, the Organization tool contained in the Company Management section allows administrators to build an organizational chart. This organizational chart provides a convenient means to add and delete learners and gives administrators the ability to see their entire organization at a glance. Galaxy can also be linked to your Human Resource database so information is automatically updated and shared between these two applications.

Another administrative feature, contained in the Learning Objectives category, is the ability to quickly and easily develop your own courses at no additional cost. The Galaxy authoring tools are included in the application and provide a very effective means to build entire libraries. Your training that currently exists in electronic format can be pulled from one application and uploaded to your Galaxy library. Graphics and narrations are uploaded from the same frame. It really is that easy! Manhattan Consultants also offers a menu of off-the-shelf courses and provides on-site administrative and authorship training.

All of this is moot unless we can demonstrate a return on investment. Manhattan Consultants has developed a thorough ROI Analysis System that has been proven accurate and effective by an independent, third party accounting firm. We are currently offering a free analysis of the cost effectiveness of your training system using this analytical tool. We explore this analysis in greater detail upon meeting, but for now, here are some basic factors for consideration.

Estimate the time it takes a training staff to design an organization's curriculum. How long does it take to build the training metrics, assemble the contents, and schedule the rooms, equipment, and learners? How long does it take to score, record and file tests? How do organizations follow-up with employees who have not demonstrated learning (failed tests)? It is understood that is part of their job. What we are proposing is that training managers spend more time enhancing and improving curriculums when these administrative tasks are managed automatically within the Galaxy LMS.

Next, consider the costs of shutting down an entire component of an operation, (or paying overtime to cover production), so employees can attend traditional classroom training. We previously stated that a blended approach (a system that integrates classroom training with web-based training) is most desirable. We maintain this belief under the condition that as much information as possible is effectively communicated via the web-based system. Almost any e-learning system offers the advantages of allowing employees to self-schedule learning activities to avoid disruptions of production. Ours system allows employees to take training from remote locations via the World Wide Web. (Security measures are implemented when employers are concerned about employees breaching the honor system.) Employees actually like taking properly designed courses. It has been our experience that many workers exceed their curriculum requirements on their own time. That means less downtime, more production time and, you guessed it – better profitability.

Finally, for the purpose of this exercise, consider your library. The Galaxy LMS, Powered by ExxTend Learning, provides a wide range of off-the-shelf courses. These courses have been intensely scrutinized and endorsed by governmental agencies and quality assurance teams. Add to that the ability to write your own courses and your training will yield a payoff previously unimaginable. Consider the advantages of new or transferred employees walking into their jobs with a thorough understanding of your equipment, production procedures and company policies. Additionally, when properly designed and implemented, your training process can provide opportunities for employees to gain knowledge outside of their current field of experience, thereby increasing their value to your organization.

If you are *not* training, you're missing tremendous opportunities to improve profitability. You're also putting your company at great risk of regulatory interventions, fines and lost revenue. The best way for businesses to fail in today's economy is to maintain status quo. You can bet your competitors are doing everything they can to find a better way. We have a better way, and you can put it to your advantage.

All in all, your Learning Management System should help you make money. Maximize use of your internal knowledge base and develop a curriculum from third party subject matter experts. This methodology of cutting edge techniques will differentiate you from your competition. Drive your organization's training to excellence and expect nothing less than a fully robust Learning Management System that meets all of the above criteria. Did I mention that a properly designed and implemented process, such as the Galaxy LMS leads to improved profitability?

About Galaxy Learning System

Galaxy Learning System is an interactive training management system from Manhattan Consultants that provides personalized training for employees. Online editing and course development tools are designed into the system so administrators can customize training modules to meet their specific training requirements. This new system combines the experience of world-class training with the advantages of personalized program development. Galaxy provides web-based training solutions that

meet stringent requirements of OSHA, EPA and other government agencies. Supervisors can track employees within their own department, monitor test scores, and ensure training requirements are fulfilled. Reports are available at any time for audits. Several Fortune 500 companies, including Lubrizol, Reliant Energy, Borden Chemical, BASF and others, are using this same system to provide individual training without the high cost of a large training staff.

About the Author

Neal Britton is the President of Manhattan Consultants, Incorporated of Leroy, Ohio. Neal has more than 20 years experience in developing curriculums and conducting training sessions for a wide range of audiences. Most recently, two Manhattan Consultants clients have won the Governor's Excellence Award in the State of Ohio for outstanding safety and health performance (Kent State University, 2000 and Lake Metroparks, 2001). Both clients agree that Manhattan Consultants' contributions to their processes are key components of receiving this prestigious award.

On a personal note, Neal Britton was honored as the recipient of the Lake County Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services Board's Jack Miller Award. In over 20 years of volunteering, Neal has made significant and valuable contributions providing training and education for families, loved ones and clients receiving ADAMHS Board supported services.

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