

Blended Learning Solutions Guide



Introduction

The way we work and learn is changing. As more companies embrace remote and hybrid working models, the way workforce training is conducted is shifting.

But it's not a question of "should we evolve workforce training?" We have to.

Younger generations joining the workforce are highly tech-savvy. But they also expect that their employers use technology for work and training. How companies approach training must evolve.

But don't consider this demand for change a bad thing: **76% of Gen Z employees want opportunities to learn new skills**. In fact, Gen Z is more likely to work for less in exchange for roles that give them a chance to learn¹. Embrace this opportunity and chance to improve the impact of your training—not just for Gen Z, but for your entire workforce.

This guide uncovers the power of blended learning solutions to train employees on compliance, safety, as well as soft and job-specific skills.

One third of Gen Z employees expect their organizations to provide them with modern technology. And **one in five say they won't tolerate bad experiences at all.**¹

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What is Blended Learning?



Blended or hybrid learning is an educational approach that combines both instructor-led training (ILT) with online training. This combines the benefits of both instructor-led classes and eLearning.

However, blended learning can also refer to any combination of different training methods. Any combination of virtual training methods (e.g., virtual classroom, online discussion boards, PDFs, or webinars) with in-person instruction counts as hybrid learning.

The Goals of Blended Learning



The main goal of workforce training is simple: to improve our workforce in order to achieve business objectives.


Training helps us get close to that goal in a few ways:

- Helping employees develop critical job and safety skills needed
- Improving worker productivity
- Aligning employees around a common goal

Blended learning is a strategic approach that helps reach workforce training goals:

- Improve the effectiveness of workforce training
- Increase employee retention of knowledge and skills

By improving the efficacy of a training approach, companies are then more likely to achieve their business goals. So, when you design your blended learning solution, start with the end goals in mind. What are the learning and performance outcomes needed to achieve business success?



Organizations that invest in employee training see **11% greater profitability**; **80% believe more training helps them meet their goals²**

Benefits & Challenges of Using Blended Learning Models



Before we share specific blended learning strategies, let's talk about the many benefits of blended learning—as well as the challenges you may face in getting started.

The Benefits of Blended Learning

Blended training gets all the benefits of in-person instruction as well as eLearning.

In-person instruction is, of course, great for engagement, discussion, and practical applications of topics. Whereas online training is more scalable and cost-effective with state-of-the-art 3D animation to show employees details and scenarios they might not be able to see in person. But there are numerous other benefits of using a blended learning approach for workforce training. This includes:

1.

Increased flexibility.

When companies rely solely on in-person instruction, employees must be available to attend, and it takes them away from work. These sessions also don't always give employees the chance to learn at their own pace. Blended learning allows companies to offer more flexibility for when and where training takes place.

2.

Cost and time savings.

In-person instruction is costly for both instructors and employees. It takes time to put together lectures and learning materials and then to present the material. Blended learning maximizes the value of in-person learning using eLearning to fill in gaps and extend knowledge at a fraction of the cost.

3.

Increased training effectiveness.

Many studies have shown that blended learning environments are more effective than pure classroom or pure digital³. Because blended learning is proven to be more effective, you're more likely to achieve your goals and see positive return on investment (ROI) from training. This ensures you fulfill training mandates like harassment and anti-discrimination training to avoid fines and ensure employees comply with these important policies.

4.

Blended learning fulfills an OSHA requirement.

OSHA compliance requirements forbid companies from only using online safety training. So, investing in a blended learning solution allows you to take advantage of the scalability of eLearning but also ensure you meet OSHA requirements.

Potential Challenges of Using Blended Learning

Blended learning solutions have been shown to consistently lead to better learning outcomes, but there are a few things to consider:



Low quality educational materials hurt training effectiveness

PowerPoint, DVDs, and outdated digital training materials aren't going to cut it. Employees in fields like chemical manufacturing, pulp and paper, and energy need high-quality courses that are created by subject matter experts who understand the realities of their jobs.



Face-to-face training must be intentional

The real power of in-person instruction is the engagement, dialogue, and ability to practically apply the knowledge. If you can't make your instructor-led sessions intentional and complement eLearning materials, your training won't be as effective as it could be.



In-person training is difficult and expensive to scale

While the in-person part of blended training is very important, it's also the most difficult to scale as your organization grows. Keep in mind that it's not required to have a lot of in-person sessions.



“eLearning tends to outperform classroom instruction and, blended learning (using both online and classroom instruction) creates the largest benefits.”

Dr. Will Thalheimer⁴



“Evidence from hundreds of media comparison studies...suggest[s] that blended learning environments are more effective than pure classroom or pure digital.”

Dr. Ruth Colvin Clark³

5 Blended Learning Approaches



The beauty of blended learning is that it is inherently flexible and there is no one right way to approach it. Let's review the five Models of Blended Training:

5 Blended Learning Approaches



1. The Flipped Model.

This approach inverts traditional classroom instruction. Your employees first use online training and then come into a classroom to dive deeper. This allows your classroom time to focus more on collaborative activities, discussions, and exercises that reinforce knowledge.

2. Face-to-Face Driver Model.

This is where most of the training is instructor-led and in a classroom. Typically, the virtual learning component can be done in the classroom with an instructor there to offer personalized support. Note that this approach does not offer the same cost and time savings and is often impractical for larger organizations.

3. Rotational Model.

In this approach, learners alternate between in-person and online instruction on a set schedule. For instance, a learner might go to class Tuesday and Thursday but have online training time Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Like the Flipped Model, classroom time is spent on discussions and projects to deepen knowledge rather than “lectures.”

4. Flex Model.

Not surprisingly, this model is all about flexibility! In the Flex Model, learners have autonomy over how and when they learn. They have access to an online curriculum and then choose when they need in-person support and instruction. Although this is best for adapting to the needs of each individual learner, this model is harder to scale for larger companies.

5. Enriched Virtual Model.

This model leans heaviest on online training with much more periodic in-person training sessions. This model taps into the flexibility of the Flex Model but is much easier to scale.

What is the Best Way to Blend?

There are merits to each of the blended learning approaches. So, what's the best one? The truth is, there is no one best way. It depends on your organization's learning goals, budget, and the current state of employee training.

And remember, this should all come back to the company's business and training objectives:

- What are the organizational goals the training supports?
- What do employees need to learn to do after the training is over?
- What might they need to know to perform those skills?

Then, ask yourself what learning activities help workers develop these skills and be able to apply them to help the business reach its goals. The answer to those questions tell you what the best way to blend is for your company.



How to Create a Blended Learning Program



Blended learning is the future of workforce training. Let's review how to build a hybrid learning strategy from scratch!



The Flipped Model



Face-to-Face Driver Model



Rotational Model



Flex Model



Enriched Virtual Model

3 Steps to Get Started

Step 1: Set Learning Goals.

Any good strategy has to start with defining [SMART learning objectives](#). Understanding what your blended learning strategy should help you achieve is invaluable in choosing a learning model and measuring the program's success.

Step 2: Choose Your Approach.

The next step is to choose your blended learning approach. Each approach has its benefits. That said, for most organizations, online training being used during classroom training is the least feasible since it still requires the most face-to-face time.

Step 3: Choose the Right Online Training Provider.

Hybrid training works best when the online courses are high-quality, up-to-date, and engaging. At Vector Solutions, we believe in [the power of 3D animation](#) to make safety training more memorable and easier to understand. When selecting a vendor, ensure they:

- Update their content regularly to keep up with industry regulations
- Use cutting-edge animation styles to create engaging and effective training content
- Provide the breadth and depth of content needed to supplement in-person instruction

Blended Training Best Practices

When putting together your training strategy, there are many evidence-based training methods to choose from. Evidence-based training is simply **training models that have been studied and proven to lead to strong learning outcomes.**

Blended learning is one example, but there are several others you might consider when creating your workforce training strategy.



Training Delivery Methods

How training is delivered (e.g., in a classroom, eLearning, live webinars, etc.)



Instructional Methods

The training technique used regardless of the delivery method. This is what makes instruction effective or not



Storytelling.

Using stories in training creates more meaningful connections with the learner, making training much more effective⁵. This can be applied to in-person instruction and eLearning through scenarios and personal storytelling.



Spaced Practice.

Also known as *Spaced Learning*, this is when training and repetition of concepts is spaced out over time. This is, essentially, refresher training. By spacing out the repetitions, learners are more likely to remember the material.



Chunking.

Chunking is the practice of taking training materials and breaking them into bite-sized pieces that are easier to learn and remember.



Analyzing Learners and their Current Knowledge before Training (pre-assessments).

Before starting training, it can be helpful to understand where each employee is at with their knowledge. We all have different educational backgrounds and experiences, so this can help set more realistic goals and pacing.

Note:

There are many other proven training best practices to choose from! This is just a sample of a few that apply to Blended Learning.

When Training is Required

Figuring out when training is needed and what kind of training is needed is invaluable in creating your blended learning solution.

Learning and development experts have defined five moments of training need, a model that says there are five moments that cause employees to require training:

1

When you learn something for the first time.

You can use just about any training delivery method for the initial learning experience. Focus on the desired learning outcome(s) and the instructional methods most likely to help bring about those learning outcomes.

2

When you want to learn more.

Advanced, scenario-based training may be helpful at this point. This can be conducted in face-to-face roleplays or through eLearning courses. Another consideration is that you can use microlearning courses to build on knowledge.

3

When you try to apply and/or remember something.

Microlearning can help employees remember by breaking concepts into bite-sized pieces. And performance support, also known as workflow learning, is an effective way to help workers apply training on the job.

4

When things go wrong.

Online training is an effective way to notify many workers when something has gone wrong. Likewise, online discussion boards and other methods of social learning can be an effective way to notice that something's gone wrong, inform others of the problem, and create and share solutions.

5

When things change.

Change often involves resistance, and people often want to understand the reasons for the change. Face-to-face, interpersonal discussions in a classroom setting, or a webinar can be an effective way to address this.



Maximizing Training Impact with Different Learning Sources

One of the best benefits from Blended Learning is that it offers variability in how we learn to reinforce important information. We can take that a step further by understanding the different ways employees learn how to do their job well and safely. People learn through:



Experience

It should be no surprise that most learning comes from hands-on experience. This is where concepts become a reality. We get to learn and improve through repetition, making mistakes, and familiarity over time.



Exposure

This refers to how we learn through social channels. These are the lessons learned from mentors, co-workers, and managers.



Education

Any formal training assigned at work falls into the education category. This is continuing education, safety certifications, and training on new technology or processes.

Blended Learning is a mix of education (eLearning and classroom lectures). But it's also an opportunity to give employees exposure to their peers and subject matter experts at work.

To give employees more exposure, consider turning some of your face-to-face training sessions into:

- Opportunities for experienced staff to come and present and share their knowledge (mentorship)
- Open discussions where employees can share ideas and ask questions

To help guide employees with on-the-job experience consider:

- Shadowing opportunities where employees have a safe way to practice what they are learning
- Mentoring programs where employees can practice new skills with a mentor there to guide them

The more you can develop a robust learning ecosystem at your workplace, the more employees learn and the more their performance improves.



Optimizing Training Methods for Types of Knowledge

When training employees, your curriculum covers different types of information. Different instructional methods are better at achieving certain learning outcomes than others. Let's break down specific training techniques that match five training needs:

Type of Information	Strategies	In-Person vs. Online
Facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create job aids that can be referenced rather than relying on memorization. • Use diagrams and images to help reinforce facts. • Provide mnemonic devices to improve memory. 	<p><i>Online:</i> eLearning makes it easier to repeat facts to help employees commit them to memory.</p>
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide definitions, examples, and nonexamples. • Use analogies to help people identify concepts. • Ask employees to restate the concept in their own words. 	<p><i>Online:</i> To introduce concepts (concrete, such as the concept of a piece of equipment, or abstract, such as the concept of efficiency) first in online training.</p> <p><i>In Person:</i> To ensure understanding, discuss concepts in the classroom.</p>
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by defining terms and facts, such as the name of the parts of your production line. • Use a combination of words, images, diagrams, and charts. • Video can help people learn and understand processes. 	<p><i>Online:</i> eLearning can help provide repetition to recall processes and understand their importance.</p> <p><i>In Person:</i> Showing employees processes in person first can be the best way to start.</p>
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the different steps / stages of the procedure. • Demonstrate the procedure. • Allow employees to practice their performance of the procedure. • Provide real-time feedback during practice. 	<p><i>Online:</i> eLearning can help provide repetition to recall procedures and understand their importance.</p> <p><i>In Person:</i> Showing employees procedures in person first can be the best way to start.</p>
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the principle and guidelines (rules). • Provide demonstrations / examples for clarity. • Allow employees to practice applying the principles in different scenarios. • Provide real-time feedback. 	<p><i>Online:</i> Teach principles first online.</p> <p><i>In-Person:</i> Provide the demos and practice scenarios in face-to-face training sessions.</p>

Phases of Blended Learning



Training a workforce takes time. Moving chunks of that training online is critical for managing costs as well as reinforcing knowledge over time.

But it's also an opportunity to measure the success of your blended learning strategy, take employee feedback, and continuously improve how you approach workforce training.

Consider Breaking a Blended Learning Campaign into Several Phases

Before Employees Perform the Work

- Engage** Give employees a heads-up that they have assigned training with required completion. Use this as an opportunity to get them excited about training by showing them what they'll get out of it.
- Prime** Deliver the initial training using your chosen blended learning approach, keeping your end-goals in mind.

As Employees Perform the Work Initially

- Apply** Start having employees apply their new skills on the job, providing performance support when helpful and creating feedback loops to keep improving.
- Connect** Help workers create learning teams and communities of practice so they can collaborate and keep learning together.

After Employees Have Been Performing the Work

- Reflect** After employees have been performing the work for a time, have employees come back together with an instructor. Use this session to have employees share feedback on the training and how it has or hasn't transferred to their work.
- Embed** Continue to help workers establish good habits and practices and provide support for their continued improvement.



How Vector Solutions Can Help



Vector Solutions is the leading provider of award-winning, intelligent SaaS solutions that help organizations prepare for more challenging workplaces. Our eLearning management software, paired with our extensive and curated content for industrial manufacturing, meets the unique needs of the industry—whether it's skills, safety, continuing education, or leadership training that is needed.



+31M

Users annually

+24K

Customers worldwide

99.9%

Platform uptime

200+

SME course developers

40+

Languages

Powerful Learning Management System (LMS)

Vector Solutions has spent decades working with companies to build and continually improve our award-winning learning management system (LMS).

Our Platform Provides Tools that Helps

- Manage job training and continuing education requirements
- Improve operational efficiencies
- Ensure compliance
- Assess employee competencies
- Customize learning plans
- Minimize risk
- Reduce costs



Award-Winning Online Training Courses

Vector Solutions sets the standard for skills and safety training courses for the industrial manufacturing industry to make onboarding new employees or training existing employees easy. In combination with the LMS, manufacturers can help employees develop job skills, fulfill compliance-training requirements, and create a safer, healthier workplace.

Our online courses include live, instructor-led webinars for continuing education as well as online multimedia e-learning courses in SCORM format that feature 3D animations. Additional course features include:



Multi-language Translations

Our courses are translated into 40+ different languages



Train on Any Device

our mobile optimized content that adapts to the layout of your learners' devices



View Courses Anywhere

With variable bitrate technology automatically adjusts video quality to limit buffering



Access What You Need When You Need It

With interactive transcript, making it easy to search and advance to selected topics



VectorSolutions.com

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