

The Next Generation of Corporate Learning

Thomson Job Impact Study shows the power of blended solutions.

Phase 2 of the Thomson Job Impact Study, “The Next Generation of Corporate Learning,” reinforces that a blended learning approach of e-learning, online instruction, simulations, texts, mentor-instructor support, and live classroom-based training has the power to increase employee productivity significantly. The findings follow earlier results that blended learning is a more effective approach than single-delivery methods.

The Thomson Job Impact Study, from NETg, a global organization in corporate education and training and part of the Thomson Corporation, measures the effectiveness of blended learning against single training options and pinpoints the necessary components for a successful blended approach.

The study was developed in collaboration with leading corporations and academic institutions, including Lockheed-Martin; NCR; Utah State University; University of Limerick, Ireland; Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Minnesota; Executive Service Corps of Chicago; and KnowledgePool. The first phase aimed to determine whether there were significant differences in the accuracy and time it took learners to perform real-world tasks after using blended learning approaches, e-learning, or no training. The results from phase 1 showed that a structured curriculum of blended learning generated a 30 percent increase in accuracy of performance and a 41 per-

cent increase in speed of performance over single-delivery options.

The second phase of the study sought to identify the essential instructional components of a successful blended solution. Researchers studied five separate groups of learners to compare e-learning with three different types of blended solutions: 1) instructor-led training, 2) text-based programs, and 3) scenario-based exercises. The IL group received blended learning driven by scenario-based exercises within the context of an instructor-led course. The text group received SBEs that included access to text objects. The scenario-based group received SBEs that included access to NETg learning objects. The e-learning group received a standard e-learning course. A control group established to benchmark performance received no training. All groups completed a post-assessment and three real-world tasks.

The new results confirm that a defined blended learning solution heightens overall on-the-job performance achieved by e-learning alone and that either blended or single-delivery models are more effective than no training. When compared with the group that received no training, the e-learning group had a 99 percent increase in on-the-job accuracy; the IL group achieved a 163 percent increase in accuracy; the text group demonstrated a 153 percent increase in accuracy; and the SBE group showed an 159 percent increase in accu-

racy. When compared with the e-learning group, the blended learning groups were 27 percent to 32 percent more accurate in task performance and performed the tasks 41 percent to 51 percent faster.

The overall analysis shows that a well-defined blended learning approach results in greater workforce productivity. The Thomson Job Impact Study, in search of the optimal blended learning model, provides insight on which components appear to be essential for success and which may be interchangeable. The three blended learning groups performed nearly identically—leading to the conclusion that the components common to the three groups represent the essential components of a successful blended learning model: the use of scenario-based exercises as the basis for learning software, actual experience using the software, and authentic assessments designed to parallel real-world tasks. Other instructional components appear to be interchangeable, having demonstrated similar levels of effectiveness.



That finding gives users flexibility to select learning tools based on availability, budget, or other business needs. The interchangeable components include live instruction, text objects or electronic learning objects within real-world scenarios, and real-time access to mentors during training. Says Joe Dougherty, president of NETg, “The study validates the effectiveness of a blended approach. In

the final analysis, the focus is on providing e-learning courses and supporting learners with a variety of instructional tools and solutions to ensure that the training experience delivers measurable job performance improvements aligned with strategic business objectives.”

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