

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

The Power of E-Performance
John W. Coné and Dana G. Robinson

Technology-enabled learning is an essential part of an escalating number of training efforts, but it doesn't guarantee success. Coné and Robinson foresee two problems with the increasing frequency of structured learning through technology.

One problem is poorly designed e-learning experiences. Too often, technology-enabled learning relies on regurgitated material from instructor and participant guides—same old stuff, new medium. The authors also believe that this recycling limits learning and hinders changes in on-the-job performance.

But there's an even greater problem with e-learning, which the authors feel poses a greater threat. That is "insufficient focus on the work environment system to ensure performance change following the learning experience."

Coné and Robinson investigate the pitfalls of relying only on the capabilities of e-learning and provide, in the end, a checklist of actions that all e-learning professionals should take to assure that their investment in e-learning equals enhanced performance on the job.

For complete text, see page 32.
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Scotland Does E-Learning
Samantha Chapnick

Two days in Glasgow transformed Chapnick from an e-learning skeptic into an e-learning evangelist, which is extraordinary considering she isn't one to mince words about the state of e-learning thus far: "With few exceptions, the quality of offerings has been dismal," she writes. "The prevailing ideology has been technology over people." But in Scotland, Chapnick finds something revolutionary: a country that has turned for salvation from manufacturing to lifelong learning.

To get to the genesis of the transformation, the author provides us with a look into Scotland's economic past, its strategy for lifelong learning, and the e-learning initiatives driven by several consortiums, Scottish Enterprise, and Scotland's governmental body, Scottish Executive.

But Scotland is only beginning the process of creating a culture in which lifelong learning is the norm. These factors lie at the heart of Scotland's e-learning success thus far:

- partnership
- community involvement
- a holistic approach
- putting psychology, sociology, and environment before anything that requires electricity.

Read the full article to learn how those factors have transformed a country known for its poetry and single-malt into a country with an applied passion for e-learning.

For complete text, see page 42.
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Why Blended Will Win
Jack Zenger and Curt Uehlein

Instructor-led training and e-learning are the lion and the lamb, the yin and the yang, the chocolate cookie and the cream center of the learning world. Zenger and Uehlein present their unique take on traditional instructor-led training and new technology-delivered training to explain that not only can those two approaches co-exist, but also that their co-existence is necessary for us to move onto something "better than we've imagined."

After outlining the salt and pepper of the two approaches, the authors cook up something different: blended or integrated learning solutions. Though the potential benefits of the blend still need time to coalesce, Zenger and Uehlein have a pretty good idea of what accounts for an appetizing mixture:

- a dash of completely integrated instructional design
- a touch of consistent framework and nomenclature
- two parts of each method delivering its best
- the zest of maximum flexibility
- and variety to taste.

Of course, it takes more than good ingredients. Organizations will have to move beyond the limitations of internal competence in only one training approach, commit to the huge up-front investment required for e-learning, and overcome the ever-present resistance to something new.

Last, blended solutions can be unpalatable to less adventurous people. Follow the authors' counsel to keep your company coming back for more.

For complete text, see page 54.
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The State of the E-Nation

Martyn Sloman

Sloman, a training and development advisor, author, and speaker in the United Kingdom, attended ASTD 2001 International Conference and Exposition in June and came away with several observations about the evolution of e-learning since his visit to the United States three years prior.

Sloman notes that in those years a lot of activity has taken place in the e-learning arena representing huge financial and intellectual investments. From his current perspective, Sloman believes that there is still substantial confidence in e-learning, though it comes with a smattering of sobriety. Learning technologies have improved, and neither market turbulence nor learner or organizational resistance is seen as more than a short-lived problem. Still, technology has run a bit ahead of learners, in Sloman's view.

Sloman thinks new industry standards and protocols will demolish the final barriers to e-learning and that blended learning will become the desired solution of the future. He cautions, however, that pedagogy hasn't developed as it should in relation to e-learning.

For complete text, see page 61.

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Retention Update

Stacey Wagner

Gone are the extravagances afforded to new employees by a booming U.S. economy. Companies trying to trim the fat are cutting nap rooms, concierge services, and onsite chefs. But disposing of such extravagances—and ultimately, employees—to boost shareholder value may be a bit short-sighted.

A year ago, before the economy stumbled, ASTD and the Society for Human Resource Management conducted a benchmark study of seven Exemplary Practice Partners, or companies that had a proven track record of low turnover and above-average employee satisfaction. The study's purpose? To gauge the effectiveness of employee growth and career development initiatives and to determine how those initiatives fit into strategic recruitment and retention.

The initial survey noted the following human capital initiatives:

- Encourage employee responsibility for development with support and accountability from higher-ups.
- Recognize employees as the main reason for the company's success.
- Focus on position or role competencies rather than requiring employees to fit within a job description.
- Recruit the "right" kind of employee.

But much has changed in a year. ASTD follows up with six of the original seven partners to determine if their investment of people has withstood the test of a faltering economy.

For complete text, see page 63.

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