Experiential Learning Strategies for Enterprises

Building Real-World Experiences in Remote Learning Environments

by **Adobe** | **eLearning Industry**

Introduction

Over the last few years, many companies have been looking at innovative ways to make training more effective which in turn, help learners reach their maximum potential. With research showing that learning by doing is the best way for people to acquire and retain knowledge, many organizations have turned to Experiential Learning. But where do you even begin? Which tools should you use to launch your new initiative? How can you bridge the geographical divide AND skill gaps so that everyone reaps the rewards of your curriculum?

This eBook shows you how to execute Experiential Learning that enriches the experience and facilitates knowledge sharing. You will also discover how to find the right advanced virtual training solution with experience design capabilities that suit your needs.

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What is Experiential Learning, and is it really feasible in remote training environments?

In this chapter, we tackle a question that is on the mind of many L&D pros and educators alike: "What is Experiential Learning?" We also explore the elements that define it, from hands-on interaction and reflection to abstract evaluation. Though many organizations find Experiential Learning to be a challenging concept, technology has made it possible to implement with great success. Stick around until the end to figure out how Experiential Learning can indeed be implemented in remote training environments.

What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential Learning is a rather broad term but, at its core, it defines any type of new skill and knowledge acquisition that comes from personal experience and reflection. It focuses on the idea that the best way to acquire new information is by linking it to experiences. These experiences can then be used to help learners recall the skills when they need them in real-life situations. There are many learning models designed to leverage Experiential Learning - problem-based, cooperative, hands-on, and project-based learning. But what makes these models truly experiential is that they not only require learners to do but also to become actively involved in the activity and reflect on its results.

The 4 elements of Experiential Learning

Everyone talks about Experiential Learning and implementing it to boost training ROI, but do we really know what it involves? Below, we talk about the 4 elements that define and are inextricable parts of the Experiential Learning experience.
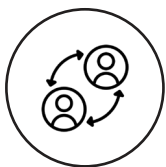
1. Direct hands-on engagement

Experiential Learning starts with hands-on interaction. The learner must be willing to engage with the training activity and examine it personally to either comprehend this new experience or interpret an existing experience in a new way. This is an active stage for learners, and it requires minimal interventions from the instructor. If the learner requires guidance, the instructor should provide it discreetly and in no way take over the activity.

2. Structured reflection

The next stage involves the reflection element that we mentioned above. Here, learners use the lens of their personal experience to reflect on the training experience and figure out what it involves and what it does not. Reflection can happen on an individual level, through questioning or processing, or on a team level, through group discussions and analyses. For example, if learners are working on a sales-pitch-gone-wrong scenario, this is when they identify potentially problematic behaviors.

3. Abstract evaluation and assessment

Moving on, learners use the observations they previously made to form new ideas and modify the experience. In other words, learners assess the situation and conceptualize what actions need to be taken to reach a different outcome. In this stage, learners form theories based on their own experiences and reflections (in conjunction with those of the group) and start drawing the conclusions that will affect their responses in real-life future scenarios. Using the same example as above, this is when the learner decides what changes they would make to ensure a successful sale.
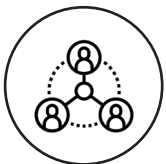
4. Real-life connections and consequences

The final and most important step is, of course, connecting theory to practice. After having reflected on and conceptualized the experience in a safe environment, learners must gauge the positive or negative consequences of their newly acquired knowledge. Were their conclusions right, or do they need to adjust them? The element of active experimentation can happen immediately after Experiential Training, or after an extended period of time. What is important is that learners can

recall information as well as the Experiential Learning process if changes are required.

Is there a place for Experiential Learning in remote environments?

We know what you're thinking: can all the elements of Experiential Learning mentioned above really translate into a virtual environment? Although there are several variables to this question, the short answer is - Yes! Technology has granted us ever-increasing tools and solutions that bring virtual experiences closer to real-life than ever. With [robust video conferencing software](#) that transforms online communication and collaboration into life-like simulators, it is now possible to offer learners a comprehensive Experiential Learning experience. Understandably, such an undertaking might seem challenging and complicated for a business. However, specialized providers can help.

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Is it worth the investment? Making a strong business case for specialized Experiential Learning platforms

Moving operations to online or hybrid environments have been particularly challenging for many businesses. However, this change does not mean that you should sacrifice the quality of your training programs and abandon the idea of Experiential Training. In this chapter, we talk about the 4 benefits Experiential Learning platforms can offer your remote employees, as well as the importance of supporting this venture with a suitable Experiential Learning platform.

4 benefits of using Experiential Learning for a remote workforce

1. Increased engagement and motivation

Because it creates interactive and fun learning experiences, Experiential Learning is highly engaging to learners. Besides, it is not hard to understand why training activity that allows hands-on interaction, reflection, and collaboration between learners is more interesting than passively listening to an instructor and taking notes. Specifically, learning platforms enable users to access interactive content, such as games, quizzes, simulations, etc. As a result, learners are motivated to participate actively in the learning process, thus increasing levels of skill development.

2. Promotes teamwork

Experiential Learning thrives in collaborative environments. As learners express their reflections and concepts regarding the training experience, they are able to come up with creative solutions to whatever problem they're tackling. Plus, distance poses no issue at all! With dedicated chats, forums, and breakout rooms, employees can communicate and work together as if they are in the same room. Through collective reflection, they build confidence in their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and become less dependent on instructors or supervisors to find solutions to their problems.

3. Real-world practice

The main benefit of Experiential Learning is, without a doubt, the ability to directly apply theory to practice. Connecting the Experiential Training experience to on-the-job situations allows learners to retain information better. In addition, they are given the opportunity to practice in an environment that leaves room for mistakes. For example, they can hone their communication skills with challenging customer personas via a simulator that eliminates the risk of a bad customer review. Practicing in a stress-free environment gives your employees room to grow by focusing on developing behaviors that will prove useful after the end of the training.

4. Promotes lifelong learning

Experiential Learning is so much more than a traditional training course. It does not just give learners the answer; it teaches them how to discover it. By actively involving learners in the training experience and encouraging them to analyze and reflect on it, Experiential Training courses help them improve their critical thinking, as well as problem-solving, communication, and knowledge management skills. These are the 21st-century skills they need to grow personally and professionally and bring value to your organization.

Are advanced experiential learning platforms worth the investment?

An Experiential Learning platform gives you the opportunity to create, launch, and manage Experiential Learning programs that take online training to the next level. But the question remains: can simple video conferencing platforms do the trick, or do you need a specialized Experiential Learning platform?

Instructor-learner communication

It is important to touch on the element of interaction, whether we are talking about an educational or professional virtual environment. A simple video conferencing platform gives you the opportunity to reach out to learners, but only in one way. An advanced Experiential Learning platform allows you to truly engage learners with chats, drawings, quizzes, and polls, all the while giving you data about learner engagement levels. On the other side of the screen, learners can easily keep up with the help of asynchronous browsing, as well as have their questions answered in dedicated chats without having to interrupt the flow of the session.
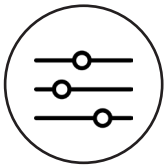
Control over training session

Think back on your last online training session via video conferencing software. You probably had to log in and start preparing your material on the spot with minimal room for creativity. Now imagine accessing a window that gives you countless virtual experience design possibilities. One that you can prepare beforehand and edit and add to in the background without affecting what trainees are seeing. If the second option sounds more enticing, then a specialized Experiential Learning platform is the way to go.

Standardization

Ensuring that the quality of training remains the same across different departments is extremely important. But that is hard to achieve when the software you are using makes you start over every single time. Thankfully, this is not the case with advanced platforms. In fact, they allow you to save each session that you design as a template, allowing you to use it as many times as

you need. In addition, you can perform small or major edits on each template, thus creating a training style across sessions.

Conclusion

The benefits of Experiential Learning in remote environments are truly more than one can explain in a chapter. But one thing we can say is that you are going to need support from specialized software if you're going to make the most of it. Hopefully, this section has convinced you that specialized Experiential Learning platforms are a foolproof way to offer your learners high-quality training that will boost ROI and add value to your organization.

3

Your roadmap for executing experience design with the right solution

Moving from face-to-face to virtual training can be challenging. The stakes are even higher when trying to keep up with ambiguous concepts that take over the eLearning market. The latest one of those concepts is experience design, but do not fool yourself into thinking it is a fad. Experience design follows a generalized shift that calls for mindful and experiential consumerism instead of superficial and material. But how can you offer your customers meaningful experiences through your products and services? This chapter delves into the definition of experience design and then gives you a step-by-step guide on how to implement it using the most suitable tool.

What is experience design?

Many businesses struggle to grasp the meaning of this term, and the reason is simple: experiences are hard to define. However, we can start making sense of it by viewing experiences as the way a customer feels in the moment that they are interacting with a product. In turn, we can define experience design as a customer-centric approach that offers products, services, and environments with features that focus on the user's needs, feelings, and perspective. In the following section, we will guide you through the process of choosing the best virtual training software to help you achieve all your experience design goals.

7 steps to execute experience design

1. Lay down your experience design objectives

This is the starting point of your Experiential Learning project. What are the experiences that you want to create? How do you want them to feel when using your training platform? These are some of the questions that will lead you to a solid plan of how you can design meaningful experiences that will captivate users and help them make the most out of training.

2. Determine pain points among learners

After laying out your overall objectives, it is a good idea to stop and listen to any feedback you already have. Usually, the road to change is laid out by the comments of your existing users as they search for ways to make training more interesting and more fitting to their evolving needs. Identify which aspects of training within your business are less than ideal and look for ways experience design can help you improve them.

3. Assess your current tech

Embracing online training does not mean you have to start from scratch. The training material and technology you are already using may fit your Experience Design project. Therefore, take the time to carefully look through all the files, multimedia, scenarios, etc., that you have been using and figure out if they can be modified to promote the experience and not passive learning. In addition, if you are already using a Learning Management System, you could integrate it into your virtual training delivery software and combine features to create unique learning experiences.

4. Compare virtual training software

At this point, you must have a clear understanding of your objectives, challenges, and available material. The next step is to find a virtual training delivery software to tie everything together. This is a great moment to tap into specialized online directories, social media groups, and industry acquaintances to find the best choices in the market. Compare features and read reviews to get an understanding of how each software enables experience design and elevates online training.

5. Prep your deployment team

The people who will implement your Experiential Learning project are just as important as the software you are going to use. At this stage, you must assess the talents of your team in order to gauge the learning curve for your new software. If your development team needs to be trained to use it, choose the necessary training materials, and lay down an effective training plan. Finally, analyze possible risks of the implementation process and prepare solutions for each one. This way, you ensure the project's success.

6. Create or cultivate your curriculum

Before launching your experience design project, make sure your curriculum is at par. Look for gaps between what you have already been offering and the captivating learning experiences you are planning for the future. This is also a great moment to decide on the type of training paths you want to design. Will it be structured training paths that are common for all learners? Or personalized training paths that each learner will slowly put together as they move through the training program? How will you measure each one?

7. Start making the most of your new software

Finally, the last step to ensuring you are executing experience design in the best way possible is to get started immediately. Be quick to train your development team on your new virtual training delivery software and release a pilot virtual training program. This way, you can quickly establish the value of your investment and iron out any issues.

Conclusion

Experience design can be a challenging concept to get a hold of, especially if you do not have the right tools. However, the ways it will benefit your business are worth the initial effort. Hopefully, the guide we shared in this section has helped you understand which steps you need to take to execute experience design using the right virtual training software and give your learners captivating learning experiences.

4

Beyond the basics:
How to fully leverage peer learning and remote knowledge sharing

Peer learning is a strategy used more and more in educational and professional environments. It focuses on the idea of knowledge sharing and learning by teaching others. It is a training strategy that yields great results, as it requires active engagement in the learning process. Let us discuss the main benefits of peer learning, as well as a few resources you can use to implement it in your organization.

# 4 benefits of using peer learning in virtual training

1. Increases knowledge retention

Passive online learning is largely responsible for employees going through online training courses that end up adding little to no value to their professional development. However, as a form of active learning, online peer-to-peer learning goes a long way in terms of knowledge retention. When employees are being trained in a collaborative environment, they are encouraged to discuss, analyze, and reflect on the concepts they are being introduced to. This way, they acquire a deep understanding of the training material and hold on to that knowledge for a longer period.

2. Promotes employee engagement

Peer learning environments keep learners hooked by giving the power back to them. Instead of spending hours listening passively to an expert, employees become active participants in the learning process by sharing their own knowledge and learning from others. In addition, this process creates a safe environment for everyone to ask questions and challenge ideas. Naturally, employees find it easier to raise their concerns with co-workers than with management.
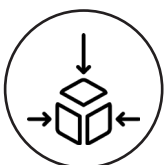
3. Builds a sense of community

Remote training can be very isolating for employees, especially if collaboration was a part of your company's daily routine. Thankfully, peer

learning can help employees connect once again, no matter where they are. This is also important for new hires who have never experienced face-to-face communication with their co-workers. Technology bridges the gap among employees, supporting them in collaborating, communicating, exchanging ideas, and sharing knowledge. This way, employees can build stronger relationships and learn how to operate more effectively as a team.

4. Boosts employee performance

One of the reasons employees feel unmotivated and dissatisfied in the work environment is the feeling of not fitting in. But with peer learning creating a safe work environment that promotes collaboration, networking, and shared knowledge, this feeling subsides. As employees help each other learn, they, in turn, grow themselves. Specifically, they build their confidence and are more willing to take responsibility for their work and lead activities. Finally, their productivity increases and their performance improves because of their genuine interest in helping the team, and each of its members moving forward.

How can you implement peer learning?

By this point, you probably understand the various benefits of peer learning. But what is most important is figuring out ways you can successfully implement it in your business. Below, we suggest a few peer learning resources to help your team collaborate and boost their productivity.

Collaborative onboarding platform

Peer learning can be useful in numerous stages of an employee's job, including onboarding. Allow new hires to feel immediately welcome and

involved in organizational processes by creating a collaborative onboarding platform. This can function as a knowledge base that contains everything employees need to be productive from day one.

Group reflection discussion boards

Even though daily tasks can be pressing, it is important for teams to also have some time for meaningful communication. Organize weekly or bi-weekly meetings where employees can reflect on their work and express their perspectives on various topics that affect the business as a whole. Such activities help employees become more effective communicators and develop their emotional intelligence.

Learning management systems

Any cloud technology platform that you use to keep remote employees connected can also be a fantastic tool for peer learning. Employees can use LMSs to share information, collaborate remotely, and communicate to solve issues in real-time.

Peer performance feedback

During peer review feedback, employees are called to evaluate each other's performance. This process allows employees to get a deeper understanding of their work, as the feedback comes from people they are in daily contact with. Keep in mind that, for this activity to succeed, employees must offer constructive criticism and be open to feedback.

Peer-led training courses

Although it might sound like it, this activity does not aim at peers taking over

the training process entirely. Instructors are still necessary, however, their role becomes more auxiliary as employees take the lead in some activities. Research shows that the more actively trainees are involved in the training process, the more engaged they become and the more information they retain.

Conclusion

In this section, we talked about the importance of peer learning to make online corporate training more seamless and effective for your employees. Using the resources we mentioned, you can help create a knowledge-sharing community within your organization, which will encourage employee development and boost performance.

Experiential Learning examples that every organization can follow

Online learning has been making great steps in the last few decades. And as technology takes over, many are starting to wonder if it can be interactive enough to keep learners engaged. We present you with 3 case studies of Experiential Learning examples that prove that virtual training can be just as—if not more—effective than traditional methods.

3 success stories that prove the effectiveness of Experiential Learning platforms

Blackmores Institute

[Blackmores Institute](#) turned to Adobe Connect to create and implement a virtual education solution when the pandemic made in-person training impossible. As a leading natural health company with a focus on research and education, it was crucial for them that their new training solution was versatile and customizable to accommodate the varied needs of their employees and stakeholders across Australasia.

Using the customizable pods that Adobe Connect offers, Blackmore's Institute created numerous types of virtual experiences for different training programs. In addition, breakout rooms were used to encourage reflection and collaboration among learners. Integrated tools such as whiteboards allowed instructors to create captivating multimedia-powered sessions. As a result, their remote staff became actively engaged in the learning process and were able to complete training faster and more efficiently. Also, after eliminating participation barriers, they achieved larger and more diverse attendance. Finally, they created a strong collaborative community that knows no borders.

Blue Sky Broadcast

[Blue Sky Broadcast](#)is an eLearning and virtual event organizer that facilitates events for companies and organizations in technical industries, such as life sciences and clinical research. As such, the company faces many challenges, including upholding high security and compliance standards and meeting the

requirements to support as many as 1000 concurrent users, all while offering a consistent experience before, during, and after events. Therefore, they partnered with Adobe Connect to help them integrate the best video conferencing and webinar capabilities into their proprietary event learning platform.

Adobe Connect offered Blue Sky Broadcast all the multimedia and eLearning webinar features it needed to elevate its own platform. The company used the solution's robust infrastructure and versatile features to introduce the video, audio, and collaborative experiences in training processes, which attracted and enabled more users to attend events. At the same time, breakout rooms boosted learner engagement by creating more meaningful and in-person learning experiences. Finally, they met their compliance requirements and were able to bring down costs by delivering smaller-scale virtual events.

2U

2U is a company that designs and implements virtual campuses for numerous colleges and universities in the U.S., aiming to facilitate access to higher education. Their services include live online classes but also program marketing, tech support, and Instructional Design. Therefore, partnering with Adobe Connect to elevate and customize their virtual experiences was a natural choice.

Using Adobe Connect's customizable pods, 2U was able to create online classrooms and office-hour sessions for educators and students. The persistent classroom feature allowed educators to offer consistent learning environments equipped with the necessary tools and materials. Learner engagement soared as instructors had access to polls, chats, whiteboards, animations, and breakout sessions. Ultimately, Adobe Connect managed to offer 2U higher attendance and success rates with its personalized and collaborative virtual learning experiences.

5 Experiential Learning examples to get you started

The companies above were able to use Experiential Learning for their training needs with the help of advanced virtual learning software. Below, we suggest a few examples of Experiential Learning activities you can leverage to enact meaningful change in your organization.

Live demos

Live demonstrations can make new concepts instantly comprehensible to learners. Using high-quality videos and audio, learners can grasp difficult technical tasks quicker than reading directions. A robust tool could also allow trainees to access the video right after the end of the training session so that they can pause and rewatch any segments.

Games

Games are one of the best informal forms of training. They enable users to identify their specific strengths and weaknesses and encourage them to keep training to improve their performance. Some games also promote teamwork by encouraging multiple users to collaborate to achieve goals.

Simulations

Many think that online training cannot support the most vital aspect of Experiential Learning, which is hands-on experience. Simulations disprove this notion by enabling learners to interact with objects as effectively as in

real life. Simulations keep learners engaged and help them gain a deeper understanding of the material at hand.

Discussion boards

Reflection and discussion are excellent examples of Experiential Learning. They promote collaboration among learners, analysis of new ideas, and exchange of different opinions. Leverage this activity by starting training programs with a discussion board that helps trainees realize why you are training on this particular subject and its various facets.

Storytelling events

Storytelling is a powerful tool for in-person and online learning. It gives learners an inside look at other people's experiences and helps them build connections through similarities. In addition, receiving information in the form of a story makes it easier to recall and implement in real-life situations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we saw a few examples of how Experiential Learning paired with the right tool transformed virtual learning for three companies. By implementing the simple activities, we mentioned, you can start your Experiential Learning journey and reap its numerous benefits.
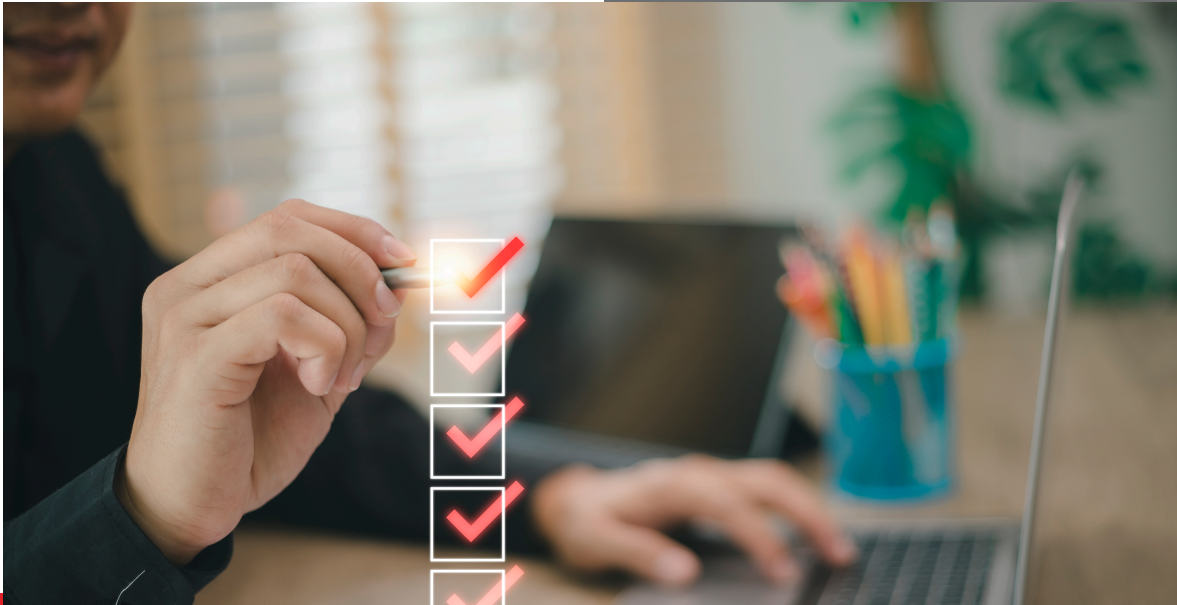
Experience Design capabilities to look for in virtual training delivery solutions

Experience design can draw more learners to your training programs and maximize results. However, to make the most out of your experience design project, you must find the right software. Choosing the right fit for your organizational and training needs can be a complex process, especially with so many solutions available in the market. It is time to talk about the features you should look for in your virtual training delivery solution and a few essential tips to choose the solution that fits your vision best.

5 capabilities to consider before choosing an Experiential Training platform
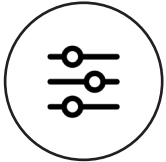
Customization

The most important feature you need from your virtual training delivery solution is unlimited customization capabilities. You should not have to sacrifice your Experience Design vision due to a platform that allows you little creative freedom. Here are some features Adobe Connect offers to empower instructors to create training programs that perfectly fit their needs.

Small functional windows, called pods, instantly expand your developing capabilities by taking any shape or form you need. They can be games, polls, chat boxes, timers, video players, LMS integrations, and many more. Combine them to create comprehensive storyboards (also called layouts), which direct the learner's attention where you want. Furthermore, templates give you the ability to save your preferred virtual training environment and share it with your colleagues. Finally, they are also persistent, which means that once you set them up, you can reuse them as many times as you need. This way, you create consistent learning experiences for your audience quickly and effectively.

Learner engagement

But is there a way to ensure motivation among users? Advanced virtual training delivery solutions make sure of it, offering learners the opportunity to actively participate in the learning process. Chats, polls,

quizzes, and reactions help them pose questions and express their opinions in an easy and stress-free way that does not disrupt the session or draw unnecessary attention to them. Collaboration and participation within groups become more accessible with breakout rooms that allow learners to tackle assignments in smaller teams. Finally, learners can access training content from any device and at any time with the asynchronous browsing feature that remains interactive, as if the session is happening in real-time.

Accessibility

One of the great benefits of online learning is that it makes knowledge accessible to everyone regardless of their physical limitations. Make your training sessions accommodative for people with disabilities by leveraging descriptive audio, subtitles, screen readers, different size and font settings, etc. This ensures compliance with accessibility mandates but, most importantly, drives participation engagement and retention.

Security

From creating to delivering virtual training experiences, you want to ensure that your material is safe from cyber threats. Invest in a virtual training delivery solution that utilizes a robust encryption and security framework that protects your hard work from falling into the wrong hands. A differentiating privilege system can also be part of your security system. This will ensure that hosts have the highest control in the session compared to other participants.
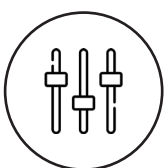
Start-to-finish control

Although this is the last point in this list, it is certainly one of the most important ones. The virtual training delivery solution that will be able

to bring your experience design to life must give you control over the process from start to finish. We have already talked about development features that give form to the learning experience. However, you should also look for features that let you shape your virtual learning environment. Finally, it is important to have access to promotion and tracking features that give you insight into performance statistics regarding the success and reach of your virtual training program.

3 tips to choose the right virtual training delivery solution
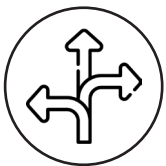
1. Search in specialized directories

Many vendors claim to offer the necessary capabilities to bring Experiential Learning from theory to practice. Since it is practically impossible to vet them all for credibility, the specialized directory is the place to look for. There, you will find vendors with certified high-quality services as well as detailed descriptions of their key features and services. Use the built-in filters to narrow down your choices and compare features to find the best fit for your organization.
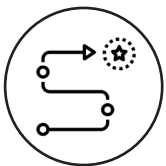
2. Take advantage of demo stages

Researching each virtual training solution's specific features is good, but trying them out is better. Many solutions offer demos or free trials for a limited period of time. Remember to prepare a few scenarios beforehand so that you are ready to get to work as soon as possible. In fact, using common requirements to test all solutions allows you to compare effectiveness, user-friendliness, and reliability among vendors.

3. Determine primary use cases

Last but not least, take the testing process one step further by designing a primary use case that perfectly captures your Experience Design objectives and the needs of your target audience. Then, ask a few of the vendors for a use case demonstration. This process will truly shine a light on the specific capabilities of each solution and let you see the exact type of learning experiences it will let you create for your learners.

Conclusion

Experiential learning can elevate your virtual training program as long as it is accompanied by the right solution. In this guide, we talked about the most prominent features you should look for in your next virtual training delivery solution, as well as some collaborative learning ideas you can implement in your own organization. The next step is putting all this knowledge into action to find the right platform.

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Know more

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