When developing any training a subject matter expert is normally included from the start of the planning process, but including an expert in virtual training early in the process will increase effectiveness, decrease out of territory time, and streamline live training time.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, the use of Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT) in corporate training departments has rapidly grown and will continue to grow according to a study conducted by TrainingIndustry, Inc. and General Physics Corporation (General Physics Corporation (GP) and Training Industry, Inc., 2010). The study found that 89% of respondents expected their VILT offerings to grow while 33% expected more than a 25% increase in the number of courses offered.

However, these statistics speak to growth in courses, but do not shed light on the challenges associated with successfully implementing a synchronous, live-online-learning program. Live-online-learning (or VILT) is a relatively new concept, and as companies explore this new delivery vehicle, rVibe’s client research has shown that training departments struggle with effective implementation, are impacted by technical issues, and have not found an effective way to migrate their existing programs to an online delivery model.

By leveraging a Subject Matter Expert in the live-online-learning process, design and technology, companies can shortcut the amount of time, and number of errors associated with implementing an effective live-online-learning program.

Two brief case studies are included in this white paper which took place over the last 4 years in implementing a virtual training strategy at two separate mid and large sized pharmaceutical companies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Current live-online-learning implementation strategies typically involve considerable time, trial and error and do not effectively engage participants on an on-going basis. At the outset, companies often construct a program using a model inappropriate for a live-online-learning setting (see Figure 1 for one common approach).

Rarely do companies take a more thoughtful approach to live-online-learning and even less frequently does a live-online-learning Subject Matter Expert (SME) enter into the process of training development. When live-online-learning is conducted this way, departments may receive positive reviews regarding decreased travel and cost savings, but score poorly in quality, learner preparedness and learner engagement, often leading to reduced performance and required re-training.

Figure 1: Typical ADDIE flow for virtual training
PREVIOUS IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

As live-online-learning is still a relatively new training method and companies have little internal knowledge to leverage. However, since live-online-learning is typically technology intensive and software-based, organizations tend to both inherit existing technologies and ultimately believe that tech-savvy trainers will be able to master the technology and lead an effective live-online-learning event.

One of the major lessons learned with the implementation of a live-online-learning strategy in the corporate training environment was developing training without appropriate consideration to design, live-online-learning techniques and technology support leads to events and training sessions experiencing numerous issues that can sometimes lead to such negative outcomes it results in a company abandoning the use of live-online-learning entirely.

In several client scenarios, previous attempts at live-online-learning using synchronous technologies have reverted to techniques such as emailing slide decks and using teleconference.

In most, if not all instances, the majority of issues could have been averted by including a SME earlier in the training development process.

Personal Case In Point: Design and Outcome of training without an SME

I have experienced this exact scenario. We encountered a training cycle that had to occur even though the newly hired representatives were unable to travel due to corporate travel restrictions. We had 3 options:

1. Delay training until the travel restrictions were lifted and increase the amount of time it would take to get these representatives in the field
2. Train them in the field.
3. Deliver the training virtually

The decision was made to deliver the training virtually and we embarked on making it work online. We used the one option we had at the time, add the slide decks, delete the workshops, and train the class with time for Q & A as we went. Over the next two weeks of training that we conducted we survived, not unscathed, but if we knew then how to approach live online delivery, it could have been considerably more effective and less painful for everyone. In the end we delivered all the information for that class, but the retention rates and engagement were not at the level that they would have had with a live training class, or a class that we would have delivered 2 years later.
PROPOSED SOLUTION

Many companies develop training using the ADDIE instructional design model for classes, workshops, curriculums, or events. If a company has little experience in the live-online-learning paradigm it is important to utilize an outside consultant with experience early in the ADDIE process to assist with the design of the proposed training.

rVibe’s primary research with clients, experience in developing and executing live-online-learning events and secondary research support this recommendation. A study conducted by TrainingIndustry, Inc. and General Physics Corporation entitled “Best Practices In Engaging SMEs During A Learning Content Development Project” (Training Industry, Inc and General Physics Corporation, 2011) supports this recommendation as well. The study broke respondents into 2 groups based on how effectively they utilized their SMEs. The first group was the “Most Effective” group who rated themselves as effective or highly effective, and the second group was the “Less Effective” group which rated themselves as average, ineffective, or highly ineffective. SMEs were consistently engaged more often throughout the ADDIE process by the “Most Effective” group than the “Less Effective” group.

Upon closer inspection, the SME is involved immediately in the Analysis Phase by the “Most Effective Group” 20% more often than the "Less Effective" group. rVibe’s qualitative research substantiates that finding: As client departments gained experience with the delivery and design of training events and training curriculums they developed internal SMEs who was consulted early in the development process of a developing training curriculums and events. The led to the development of more engaging live-online-learning resulting in greater effectiveness, increased cost savings and less out of territory time for representatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is important when planning any training curriculum, workshop, or event such as a product launch, new hire training, or product training to include a subject matter expert early in the process (Figure 2).

Every company has in-person training expertise in house, but often they do not have the live-online-learning experts in place to ensure they are designing the most engaging and effective event possible. It is important to include a live-online-learning SME to assist in the analysis, design, and development of the training event. If a department does not have a live-online-learning SME, the cost of hiring a consultant will almost always be saved by the amount that can be saved using a properly blended approach of asynchronous, synchronous, and live training. Take a look at the case in point on the next page that illustrates the success that can be attained by including a live-online-learning SME early in the process.

![Figure 2: Proposed ADDIE flow with SME](image-url)
**Personal Case In Point:** Design and Outcome of training with an SME

In the initial analysis phase for a training event scheduled to train tenured representatives on a new product I was able to start making recommendations regarding what training could be conducted using both asynchronous and synchronous training methods as well as what was best to be conducted as live training. When the process moved into the design phase I made the recommendations on the training objectives to be conducted virtually as well as the size and Live Online Training configuration to be used [editor’s note: see figures 3 & 4] including the best platform to meet the objectives. During the development phase I worked with the training team to take existing training slide decks and workshops and adjust the delivery method to fit the Live Online Learning Platform we were going to use. All of this combined to allow the live product training to be reduced to one and a half days fully focused on the sales aspect of the product training.

To give a better perspective on what this truly means, as we were evaluating different options in the training phase, we were looking at a 3-4 day training utilizing the standard home study and live training method that is typically implemented.
SUMMARY

The key to effective and engaging live-online-learning is understanding the proper way to implement a live-online-learning strategy and how to properly scale the presentations, technology, and facilitation. In order for this to occur it is best to consult with a subject matter expert very early in the ADDIE process. With the current economic state, budget tightening, and ever changing market landscapes it can be the most effective way to get sales teams trained faster and make your live meeting time more streamlined and more effective. The subject matter expert will be one of the key contributors to developing an effective, engaging live-online-learning program that will increase the representative’s effectiveness, decrease out of territory time, and make live training more effective and streamlined.

ABOUT RVIBE

rVibe is the leader in live-online-learning implementation practices, strategy and technology. With deep ties to the training industry and over 150,000 successful learner hours supported for a variety of clients, rVibe’s proprietary Virtual Maturity Model (VMM) is a class-leading methodology for companies to exploit for positive learning outcomes. By providing innovative and robust technology solutions, coupled with high-value consulting and production support, rVibe has helped clients achieve millions of dollars in savings, dramatically improved training perception and driven increases in revenue.

See www.rvibe.com for more information.

WORKS CITED


rVibe Case Studies available by request.