



next thought  
studios

# The HR Professional's Guide to Online Training

## E-Book Guide



# Contents

- 03** Introduction
- 04** Managing Training Programs
- 05** 5 Reasons to Train Employees Online
- 08** How to Create Customized Online Learning Programs
- 11** Begin Creating Your Online Training Program
- 15** How to Maximize the Success of Your Online Training Program
- 19** Partner With NextThought Studios
- 21** Next Steps





# Introduction

Organizing and providing employee training is one of the many important responsibilities human resources professionals have. It's what enables employees, both new and old, to perform their work correctly and safely, ensures your company stays in compliance with regulatory requirements and creates a healthy work environment.

As an HR pro, you want to provide a training experience that delivers optimal learning outcomes, that trainees enjoy and that doesn't use an excessive amount of time and resources. You want to create a training program that meets the needs and exceeds the expectations of employees, management and the company as a whole—and you have to do all that while balancing your many other HR responsibilities as well!



# Managing Training Programs

Managing training programs comes with plenty of challenges. It can be difficult to find a time that works for all the participants without bringing your business' operations to a grinding halt. Different people also have different learning styles. Some just don't like classroom environments, while others thrive in them.

It's can also be challenging to find an educator with the right expertise and, even once you do, it's understandable they might overlook a few topics. If operating in only a classroom environment, trainees don't have anything to look back on if they need a refresher later unless you hand out takeaway materials.

To counter these challenges, HR professionals are increasingly turning to online employee training and development programs.

more than  
**77%**

of companies in  
the U.S. now offer  
online training

Around **77 percent of companies in the U.S.** now offer online training, sometimes called e-learning, to their employees. The number of people taking **online courses in higher education** and for personal development is increasing as well, demonstrating its popularity. The trend isn't slowing down, either. The number of learners and educators choosing to use online elements in their programs continues to grow steadily.

Creating an online training and development program is one of the best ways to deliver optimal learning outcomes. They can be especially useful if you combine them with blended learning practices and multimedia features **such as training videos**. Continue reading to learn more about the benefits of online training and how to create a successful program.



# 5 Reasons to Train Employees Online

Why should you use online employee training? The quick answer is improved learning outcomes, but there are many other ways it can benefit your company as well.

## 1 Improve Learning Outcomes

One recent study reviewed research conducted over a 12-year period that compared online and classroom education, mostly for continuing education and employee training. It found, on average, the online students performed better. The average online student **scored in the 59th percentile**, while the average classroom learner scored in the 50th percentile.

the average online student scored in the

**59%**

the average classroom learner scored in the

**50%**

Using videos in your training programs can also improve learning outcomes. **Ninety- three percent of teachers surveyed** for a study by Kaltura said video “improves the learning experience.” Other research backs them up. Studies show viewers retain **95 percent of the information presented** when it’s in video form, versus just 10 percent when reading text.

Combining video with other types of multimedia content and training experiences, including interactive features like quizzes and games as well as in-person and hands-on training, can make the overall training program even more successful.

## 1 Support Continuous Learning

Using video and other online content provides another benefit. Even long after you’ve finished a training session, trainees can look back at this content



any time they need a refresher. With classroom training, this isn't possible. They might have notes to look back on, but even extensive notes can't give them the full classroom experience again. With web-based training content, they can review it in full anytime, which can help improve their retention.

## 1 Save Time

Wondering how to onboard employees faster or fit training into current employees' busy schedules? Online training may be the answer you're looking for. With web-based training, employees can finish courses on their schedule and at their own pace.

Rather than trying to get everyone into one room at the same time, you can let staff choose to complete training whenever it's most convenient for them. This flexibility is especially useful for remote employees or those who might have trouble getting to training sessions outside their regular work hours.

Additionally, it saves time for the HR team. You can create the course once and then let it mostly run itself while making adjustments and adding supplemental content as needed.

## 1 Reduce Costs

Using online training also reduces the costs associated with training without sacrificing quality. Studies suggest companies **can save up to 50 to 70 percent** when replacing classroom instruction with online training.

Companies can  
save up to

**70%**

replacing classrooms  
with online training

You don't even necessarily have to switch entirely to an online experience to realize cost savings. Rockwell Collins, an avionics and information technology systems company, saved **40 percent of its training costs** by transitioning just 25 percent of its program to a web-based format. Reducing costs might also enable you to provide more in-depth training. When IBM switched to an online system, it was able to **provide five times the learning** while cutting costs by one-third.





How does e-learning save you money? You'll eliminate or reduce travel costs, the amount of lost productivity from trainers & trainees during the training period, the costs of renting a space and the costs for physical print materials. Because training goes more quickly, you eliminate travel time and enable employees to train outside regular hours. Staff also won't have to sacrifice as much of the time they'd typically spend performing their regular work duties, which saves the company money indirectly.

### 1 Enable Customization

Incorporating online features into your training program also allows for customization, which makes training more effective. In a classroom training session, every participant typically gets the same information, regardless of their prior knowledge. Online modules allow workers to skip over information that doesn't apply to them or that they already know if the trainer decides this should be an option.

You can also create multiple training programs for employees in different departments or with different job titles at a much lower cost than if you have to hire a trainer and print materials for each different class.



# How to Create Customized Online Learning Programs

Once you've decided to start incorporating online and multimedia elements into your training, it's time to create your program. Before you can do this, though, you need to ask yourself several questions that will help guide you through developing your learning plan.

## Decide on Your Goals

The first thing you should do is define the overall goal of your training program. Training can help you achieve many objectives, and you might have more than one in mind. Here are a few of the most common purposes of online training and development:

- Onboarding new employees
- Teaching new skills
- Teaching new techniques for current skills
- Improving workplace behavior or environment
- Improving workplace safety
- Relaying new information
- Reaching compliance or satisfying regulatory requirements

If there is a compliance element to your training, the rules or standards you are following will likely lay out some requirements for how you should conduct your training. Be sure to consider every step of the planning process, so your company remains in compliance.

You should also ask yourself what you hope to achieve by switching to a web-based education platform. Are you hoping to, for example, improve the effectiveness of your training, save time or reduce costs? All of these objectives may play a role.





## Think About Who is Receiving the Online Training

The group you are training will impact how you should structure the curriculum. Are you training new employees? Current employees? Seasonal employees? Current employees will already have some knowledge about the company, while you have to start completely from scratch with new hires. You might also have some ideas about the learning styles of employees you've trained before, while with new staff members, you won't. You can address this by including multiple options or distributing a survey beforehand.

You might also want to tailor your course based on whether you're teaching full-time versus part-time employees, as well as entry-level workers versus upper management. These groups all have different responsibilities and different perspectives on the organization that will impact how they interpret and use information.

Take into account what each participant needs to succeed in the class. For example, what languages should you present information in? There might be other needs you'll have to accommodate. Some learners might have visual, hearing or other impairments, as well as learning disabilities. Creating an inclusive learning environment will make your training program more successful overall.



You might want to **tailor your course** based on whether you're teaching full-time versus part-time employees, as well as entry-level workers versus upper management.



## Determine Your Budget

You'll also need to consider your budget when developing your training plan. Funding will impact the amount of and types of resources you can use, including instructors, instruction space, technologies, materials and more. It will affect how much work you can outsource versus how much you can do yourself.

Luckily, online training can help you reduce costs. If budget is a concern, consider using more web-based elements in your training. You can also pare down content to only the most essential components if necessary.

## Decide on a Timeframe

Also, take into account the timeframe in which you must complete your training course. Is there even a due date, or is it more of an ongoing process? If you have a quickly approaching deadline, you might have to set stricter requirements for when employees complete their training. Offering a flexible schedule, however, can help more workers find time to complete the work, especially those with busier schedules.

## Find Tools That Are Already Available

Take stock of the tools you have available. You might already have classroom space, computers, educators, training videos or other resources ready to go. If so, you might want to incorporate them into your plan so you use your resources efficiently and keep costs down. Be careful not to sacrifice quality for convenience, though.

Also, consider companies you already have relationships with that might be able to help you with your training. These partners could include education design professionals, [video production companies](#), safety professionals and others.



# Begin Creating Your Online Training Program

Once you've figured out what you need from your training program and the resources you have to work with, you can start the process of creating your online training program. Here's how to go about it.

## Get Everyone Involved

A helpful strategy for how to train employees online is getting input from everyone involved. Bring employees and management into the process and ask for their opinions on what you should teach and their preferred learning methods. It's crucial you meet your employees where they're most comfortable. Sometimes, they feel they can learn best in an online environment, while at other times, they might prefer a hands-on training experience.

It can also be helpful to consult with corporate training, e-learning and video production experts. Doing so will help you create a plan that fits the needs of your team and employs the latest best practices and technologies as well.

### HELPFUL STRATEGY:

Get input and opinions from everyone involved

## Choose a Format

Even within online training, there are numerous formats to choose from. One preliminary question to ask is whether your program will be synchronous or asynchronous. In synchronous sessions, all trainees participate at the same time. Asynchronous learning allows employees to partake in training at any time. You might choose to include both synchronous and asynchronous aspects in your curriculum.



Some online learning formats include the following:

- Web-based modules: This typically asynchronous format involves computer-based learning in which the participants interact only with the computer and progress at their own pace through the training course.
- Virtual meetings: This synchronous format involves web-based video or audio instruction in which an instructor leads the session in a chatroom or virtual conference room setting.
- Social learning: This setup can be either synchronous or asynchronous. Employees learn by interacting in an online forum with instructors and fellow learners. They can ask questions, receive information and have discussions in this forum.

Often, companies will combine aspects of these three formats, as well as other training methods. The technique of combining various education types is called blended learning. This tactic is widely regarded as an ideal approach to high-retention learning. The varied approach also more accurately reflects how people learn on the job. For instance, you might choose to combine online learning with in-person instruction and hands-on training.

The HR team will also need to decide what features to incorporate into the training. These features could include quizzes, video conferencing, email, chat, webinars, online games, video and even advanced technologies like **virtual reality**. Interactive video is especially compelling, since it **combines the visual aspects of video with interactivity**.

Choosing the right format or combination of formats is crucial for developing a successful corporate training program. It will make the curriculum feel personal, even if it doesn't take place in person, and helps you get your message across accurately.

## Create a Schedule

When designing your curriculum, be sure to include a schedule and plan for the order of the training activities. This schedule might be quite strict or very relaxed,



depending on the type of training you're doing, your company's culture and the preferences of your trainees and management.

If deadlines are critical to the success of your initiative, ensure all the participants understand when the due dates are and the importance of meeting them. It might be helpful to assign deadlines for specific activities to keep everyone on track.

An important part of this is to keep track of who completed which activities so you can ensure everyone is on schedule and the program meets all learning objectives and compliance requirements.

## Allow Refreshers

To help trainees retain information over the long run, consider allowing or even requiring them to return to training materials periodically. You might want to create quizzes for these times to verify knowledge or offer extra learning opportunities for those who want to increase their skills and knowledge further.

## Measure and Report on Progress

Make sure you develop a method for tracking the progress and results of your training. You should know who completed which activities, how long it took them and how well they did on each one. Gathering feedback from trainees on the program can also help you improve your processes going forward.

You should also gather data that could help you evaluate the success of your program. If the goal was to improve safety, for instance, keep track of safety statistics both before and after completion of the program. If the goal was increased productivity, measure each employee's output before and after training.

If you collect more detailed data, you might see a correlation between employees' performance in training and productivity increases. For example, you might find employees who scored higher on quizzes improved their output more. You might also discover workers who took longer to complete a course, for instance, had better outcomes. This finding would lead you to encourage employees to take



their time during future sessions.

Keeping track of your program's success also allows you to show upper management why your training initiative is worthwhile, enabling you to continue it and improve it in the future.

## Work With a Pro on Your Learning Software

If you plan to use an e-learning course, you have several options for how to acquire the necessary software. Below, you'll find a list of these options in order, from the simplest and least involved approach to the most customized.

- Buy an off-the-shelf system: The simplest method is to buy a training system from an online education company. For more general or standardized training needs, this may work well, but the content will lack specificity to your organization.
- Purchase a customized system: If you want an experience that's a little more personalized, you can license a software program but have the provider customize it to your needs. If the provider can't do that, you can contract with a third party to customize it.
- License the software and customize it: Alternatively, you can purchase a system and customize it yourself. Some programs are designed to be easily customizable. With others, it might be more challenging to do this.
- Build your own system: You can also build your own system or work with a company that specializes in custom created online training courses. If you have a set of topics to cover that is unique to your organization, this will be the way to go. If someone on your team has the skills to create a system, you can do it yourself. Otherwise, an educational design company can build it for you to your specifications. You might also want to do some aspects yourself and leave the more technical parts to an outside contractor.

Whether or not you build a system on your own, you might consult with an online education company that can give you advice on how to proceed. You might also want to work with a company that can create content such as videos and interactive modules for your training course. A **professionally produced video** or other forms of content can make your training more engaging, effective and professional-looking.





# How to Maximize the Success of Your Online Training Program

Many factors determine how successful an online training program will be. To help you ensure yours meets and exceeds your expectations, here are some of the most effective techniques for training new employees online.

## Focus on the Employee Benefits

When discussing training, especially when introducing the idea, focus on the benefits to employees. Talk about these benefits early on, so people start off with a positive impression of the training. Explaining the purpose behind it can also help keep employees motivated to complete the training. It's important to remember enthusiasm can rub off!

Tell employees exactly what they'll learn about during the course and how it will help them in their day-to-day work. For instance, will it make them more productive, help them boost their sales and earn more or perhaps keep them safer on the job? Discuss the health and well-being benefits as well, such as the increased confidence and decreased stress that accompany increased knowledge and skills.

## Create a Calendar

To help employees stay on track, create a calendar with estimated completion dates and any due dates. This feature will be especially useful for time-sensitive training or exceptionally busy staff. Incorporate reminders about upcoming due dates or events into your calendar feature so trainees don't fall behind. The calendar feature will help trainees stay organized and prevent them from getting overwhelmed, which can get in the way of learning.



## Offer a Flexible Schedule

Although a calendar feature is often helpful, preserve as much flexibility as you can to make it easier for employees to get all the required training activities done. Some programs and topics will lend themselves to a flexible schedule better than others.

Allowing employees to complete training on their own schedules can lead to better outcomes and a better experience for trainees, especially for the busy ones. Make course materials as easily accessible as you can and make the course user-friendly and easy to navigate.

In fact, you might even want to encourage employees to take their time and reflect on what they're learning. [According to a Harvard Business School study](#), students who take time to stop and think about tasks they've just performed show more improvement than those who just did the task without a reflection period. Build some reflection time into your schedule, if at all possible.

## Keep Activities Manageable

Another helpful online training tip is to keep activities small and manageable. Short modules and exercises are easier to fit into busy schedules. You can fit them in between meetings or even do them on the train ride home.

They also cater to short attention spans. Recent research has found people now typically lose focus [after just eight seconds](#). This discovery has given rise to the trend of microlearning, which consists of learning sessions that last just [three to five minutes](#). Microlearning typically uses media such as video and focuses on one signal topic during each session. This approach prevents learners from getting overwhelmed with information and enables them to stay focused and get the most out of each training experience. Aim to create videos that are, [at most, five to 10 minutes long](#).

Create a microlearning online library full of these short clips employees can access anytime so they can learn something whenever they have a spare minute.



## Consider Company Culture

You'll also want to make sure your training programs fit with your company culture. Doing so will help employees relate to it and make it more easily applicable to employees' everyday work life.

For example, if you have a more laid-back work culture, keep the text lighthearted. If your industry is more formal, your modules and videos should match that tone. When creating videos, the people in them should dress similarly to how people dress at your company. If employees typically wear jeans to work, for instance, it may be harder for trainees to get on board with training videos in which everyone is wearing suits.

## Make it Multi-Platform

In today's world, people typically access content across multiple devices. Cater your training to people's technology habits by making your training content accessible on desktop, mobile and tablet platforms. Use a responsive design, which enables your content to adjust to the screen its appearing on, to make sure it works well no matter where people access it. Invest in user-friendly design for all platforms to keep training frustration-free. This adaptability will enable employees to complete their training at work, at home and even while they're out and about.

## Make it Multi-Platform

If your trainees are especially busy or you're on a tight schedule, prioritize your topics by importance. Make sure you have time to cover all of the required issues, then move on to the next most important item on the list and so on. Focus on what the employees most need to know to make your training process more efficient.

Another strategy for how to save time on training new employees is to ensure the software is easy to use. Doing so will help minimize the number of technical difficulties you experience along the way, which can substantially slow down the process.



Giving users more flexibility in how they approach the program can also help, since it enables them to move quickly through topics they already understand. You could even offer a test-out option for employees who feel they already know the material. Keep in mind, though, that if you're conducting training for compliance purposes, the rules might not allow this.

## Use Media to Increase Engagement

Twenty percent of employees are **actively disengaged at work**. Keeping staff engaged during training is both a challenge and a necessity. Using media and technology can help you do this. In fact, **77 percent of students report** technology increases their engagement with course materials.

A wide range of technologies can help you improve your online training. Simple online games and quizzes, interactive presentation software, **animations**, 3D motion graphics, video and interactive video are just a few of these tools. Partnering with a company that can produce this kind of content can take your online training program to the next level.

## Create High Quality Content

Perhaps the most essential and fundamental tip for creating online training courses is to use high-quality content. Your modules need to be user-friendly, your content needs to be accurate and easy to understand and your media need to look professional. Quality should be a priority throughout the content creation process. If it isn't, you might not get the results you want from your training.

If you can create high-quality content yourself, that's great! If you don't have those capabilities, consider partnering with an online training company or a **professional video production company** that can help you reach your web-based education goals.



# Partner With NextThought Studios

Looking for a partner who can help you create content that helps you meet your training goals? NextThought Studios has experience working on interactive online education programs for both public universities and private companies. We've worked on projects related to training, education, marketing and more and can help you create effective learning environments, systems and onboarding programs.

Whether you want to streamline your compliance-related training, improve your workplace safety program, figure out how to onboard your employees more quickly or teach current employees new skills, we can provide the personalized solutions you need. We offer pre- production, studio production, onsite production, post-production and full video production services. Some of the specialized services we provide include the following.

- Corporate training videos: We can produce **high-quality corporate training videos** that improve information retention, training consistency and a host of other benefits. We can incorporate interactive elements such as quizzes into our videos and customize the video to your needs. For example, we can create and insert CAD drawings of your products, show your product in action and provide a visual representation of typical customer interactions.
- Educational videos: We've created **more than 4,000 educational videos** and can not only provide you with curriculum development support, but create videos that are enjoyable, engaging and effective. We'll work with you to write a script, film content and edit your project so it meets your education goals and fits into your curriculum.
- Animations and 3D motion graphics: Our expert **video animation and 3D design** team can produce everything from standalone animated videos to 3D motion graphics that can integrate seamlessly into your training program. With animation, you can create a visualization of almost anything, from the internal design of a product to common process problems to sales scenarios.





- Interactive videos: **Creating an interactive video project** helps keep trainees engaged and gives them more control over how they proceed through the course. It also makes it easy to track trainee progress and measure performance metrics. Our videos are compatible with desktop and mobile browsers and offer browser-based editing and user-friendly media management.
- Video live-streaming: Holding a live training event or educational experience? We can record it, **live-stream it** and provide video production work so even those who can't make it to the event can experience it. We'll make sure the lighting is flawless, the sound is perfectly audible and all slides are visible. We can also help you upload it to streaming services and post a permanent version online so everyone can refer back to it in the future.

At NextThought Studios, we can produce high-quality corporate training videos that improve information retention, training consistency, and a host of other benefits.





# Next Steps

**Want to learn more about how we can help you create a web-based program that will take your training to the next level and improve your learning outcomes?**

Contact our team or request a quote today. We'd love you hear from you!



next thought  
studios



405-673-5582



2701 E Imhoff Rd, Norman, OK 73071



[www.nextthoughtstudios.com](http://www.nextthoughtstudios.com)