



The definitive guide to continuous learning in 2022



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Chapter 1

Introduction: What is continuous learning and why is it significant?

In a constantly evolving corporate world, technology and the best practices for business are ever-changing. As a result, organizations need to have agile and effective strategies in place to cope with these inevitable shifts. While some of these changes are large and abrupt and others smaller, it is important for businesses to be prepared to act timely and accordingly and attain the necessary knowledge and information to have continued success.

Change and adaptation, however, are not always easy. With a good thing going, it can be quite difficult to comprehend the benefit of taking on a new approach to something. But it is an undeniable fact that change, especially in the business world, waits for no one. If you wait for change to happen first then adapt, it may be too late to leverage the resulting advantage.

With fast-evolving business needs, the lifespan of skills (and technology related to these skills) is quite short. Many of the skills taught in training sessions on specific processes and programs become obsolete in less than a year. Systems are frequently being updated, policies are being changed, new technologies are being implemented, employees have to learn new skills, and all of these changes require training. As a result, learning agility has increased exponentially. Without employees who are agile to adapt quickly and create new solutions, organizations will fail to provide the value that helps the business grow. To keep this pace and growth by it's important to make sure employees are constantly receiving new training and knowledge. Continuous learning is the best way to do this. It typically takes place after the completion of formal training and happens throughout the course of one's career. Because of its effectiveness, continuous learning has quickly been adopted by many organizations.

Significance of Continuous Learning

We are in midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As a result, technology that is commonly used within many jobs is changing quickly. Core skills in industries and specialized interpersonal skills are being reinterpreted. To keep up with this, companies need to provide continuous learning to ensure their employees are well-equipped for the change, no matter when it may come. To have the most success with continuous learning, many companies will set their own goals and objectives. Organizations have seen that there is a direct correlation between this approach and the rate of growth for the business in the future. In order to be agile and respond to the rapidly changing economic conditions, continuous learning takes center stage. In order to do this effectively, it is important to re-examine assumptions, reflect on values, review the current methods, and evaluate policies and practices. At an organizational level, continuous learning is reflected by a team transforming itself in response to maximize the changing conditions. The benefits from continuous learning are holistic and can be seen for both the organization and individuals equally. We will touch on those benefits in the next section.

Desired outcomes of continuous learning

Desired Outcomes for the organization

With continuous learning, there are multiple benefits that companies strive to achieve on a large scale. We have outlined a few of these benefits below:

- **Enhanced performance and productivity**

Training through continuous learning gives employees a better understanding of their responsibilities within their role and guides them to achieve positive outcomes. This helps them work more productively with increased competence on a day-to-day basis, respond with more agility to changes at work and customer needs, and meet future demands in the marketplace more effectively.

- **Higher return on investment**

Employee training calls for a lot of investment, both in terms of cost and time. But, if it is fine-tuned and targeted at the company's business goals, there can be a quicker return on investment. In the long run, investing in the development of continuous learning for employees is less expensive than rehiring and retraining new employees in the long run. Additionally, with continuous learning, an existing employee will be more valued and will feel more motivated to be fully productive quickly. The initial investment can be attained through improved employee performance and an increase in revenue.

- **Reduced employee turnover**

Routine and steady upgrading of domain knowledge and upskilling instills agility and motivation in staff as they constantly look forward to improving their performance. A feeling of self-growth and meaningfulness at work leads to job satisfaction. This translates to lower attrition, higher retention, and reduces the burden of constant recruitment and training of new employees.

- **Innovation that provides a competitive edge in the market**

Continuous learning allows organizations to be at the forefront of changes in the business world. New ideas and technology help in invention, innovation, and creativity for employees. This helps organizations outshine their competition as clients are constantly looking for innovative and creative measures to power their growth.

- **Greater customer loyalty**

Well-trained, skilled, motivated, and engaged employees who interact with customers become your biggest brand advocates. They are instrumental in building and strengthening the brand image. With continuous improvement of their knowledge of the brand, they can present products to clients in masterful and enthusiastic ways. This improves customer experience and wins customer loyalty.

Desired Outcomes for the Individual

Apart from direct benefits to the organization, there are indirect benefits on an individual level. Though they may seem insignificant to the organization at first, they can in fact translate into impressive gains on a larger scale in the long run. We have outlined a few of these benefits below:

- **Professional Growth**

Continuous learning enables an individual to acquire new skills and gain confidence in their professional career. This, in turn, will empower them to work hard to achieve both rewards and promotion within the company.

- **Sense of increased responsibility and accountability**

When given the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge with other employees, and develop one's own skills, employees feel a sense of respect and recognition. This will then give them a sense of responsibility, accountability, and belongingness to the team and organization.

- **Team player**

When employees begin to open to the ideas shared by others, they create a shared vision and begin to work towards a shared goal. These are the hallmarks of being a good team player. Sharing knowledge and learning from team members helps to increase collaboration within teams. This immediately translates towards both personal and organizational growth.

- **Increased employability**

At an individual level, continuous learning increases employees' knowledge and skills. In turn, this will also increase their employability for future jobs and satisfy their inherent desire to learn and develop.

Chapter 3

How to Build a conducive continuous learning environment

Creating a supportive learning environment that encourages employees to continuously engage with learning activities requires more than a wish. It needs long-term commitment, resources, funds, and coaching. Employees are typically trained for their specific role and then expected to cope with all learning requirements individually. This should not be the case. Organizations can start to navigate this tricky area by incorporating the following beliefs:

Become a role model

When employees observe that their manager is fully invested, engaged, and supportive of learning and development initiatives, it motivates them and creates an atmosphere that promotes continuous learning.

Design a learning plan

When continuous learning is part of the work culture, defining learning goals that are aligned with business goals is imperative. Employees will appreciate having a defined structure for their personal growth that is directly connected to company growth.

Create infrastructure to support learning

Organizations should plan to invest in technology where they can create resources to be used for continuous learning. A tool that is easy to use and to create resources, as well as easy to access from anytime and anywhere should be a top priority.

Chapter 4

Areas to integrate continuous learning in your company

To be impactful and contribute to business growth, training programs are tailored to the strategic requirements of the business. There are certain generic focus areas present in all organizations, however, that will be most beneficial from taking advantage of continuous learning. We have outlined those below:



Onboarding

This is an orientation program for new employees that helps them learn about the company and (sometimes) their specific role. By undergoing the onboarding process, employees acquire the skills, knowledge, and behaviors essential to become productive in the organization effectively and in little time. The program is usually prepared by the HR manager, covering topics such as the company's history and its corporate culture, basic policies, organizational structure, and other general information an employee should know about the company. This training applies to all roles and departments throughout the company.



Job-specific training

This is the area where continuous learning has proven to be most effective. For job-specific training, learning takes place often and can depend on the job role, position, or department. It is important to remain up to date and proficient on an ongoing basis since technology and skills for some jobs are constantly evolving. This program most often includes product and service training, compliance training, new skills training, motivational training, and changes in law and work processes management.



Managerial training

This type of training is imperative for every company to build leadership skills and a strong executive team. The highly successful employees showing sustained performance are identified for higher responsibilities and require continuous learning programs. These candidates assigned for managerial training must be trained in various topics from complete product knowledge to financial, risk management skills, and team management.

E-learning for Continuous learning

The best way for companies to promote and integrate continuous learning into their working culture is through e-learning. Online learning is the best fit for employees who are on the go and geographically dispersed. This approach facilitates just-in-time learning and enables anytime, anyplace learning for the digital native. Moreover, e-learning can take many different forms to meet all training needs and make the content more engaging. With the freedom to access learning material at their convenience, employees have more motivation to complete it. This approach gains more value as the training becomes a continuous journey rather than a one-time event.

Let us look at what the statistics reveal with regards to continuous e-learning:



In addition to the advantages mentioned above, repetitive tasks such as explaining the schedule, listing readings to review, giving tests, and collecting data can be automated. Notifications and emails about progress and upcoming training can be just as easily automated. One of the most significant values of e-learning is that companies can create bespoke courses for employee training. It is easy to personalize the program in terms of names, specific content tracks, objectives, and individual competency levels, to tailor according to the unique requirements and preferences of the organization.

All these inherent benefits that can be attained with online training, along with the immense monetary benefits, make a strong point for the use of e-learning for implementing continuous learning. The substantial return on investment generated can, in turn, be channeled for the company’s growth and continuous success.

While companies can find substantial value in adopting e-learning to get started with continuous learning, the benefits to the employees receiving this training are quite significant. The skillset gap learners need to close to adapt to modern places of work is continuously increasing. It is, therefore, not difficult to realize that the typical levels of skills are not substantial to cope with modern-day work requirements. Employees need a framework of training that is aligned to their habits, is up to date on domain knowledge, is cost-effective, and does not keep them away from their jobs for long periods.

Advantages of an e-learning approach to continuous learning

In addition to the statistics mentioned above, we can sum up the overall benefits of continuous learning below:

Benefits

The flexibility of time to engage with the training

Easy access to a variety of courses and content

Access training anytime, anywhere

Self-paced learning for better knowledge retention

More cost-effective option

Ability to create a personalized learning journey

Availability of a wide variety of resources to supplement learning

Becoming a part of the larger community with similar learning needs

Learning while on the job

Types of E-learning methodologies for continuous learning

When looking to take advantage of e-learning for continuous learning, there are a couple of proven effective methods that can be adapted to get the most out of the strategy. We have highlighted a few of those methods below:

Microlearning

Microlearning is one of the hottest e-learning trends. This is because it is more engaging, less time-consuming, and cheaper to produce when compared to formal e-learning courses. The course content is created as a series of multiple micromodules. Considering dwindling attention spans, Microlearning modules average between two to five minutes in duration. This is not mandatory, however, and depends entirely on the kind of content. The bottom line is to keep it as short as possible and remove the frills. In addition, this approach to continuous learning does not require any trainer intervention as it is completely learner-driven. The best method to create these training courses is to identify the larger learning objective and then break it down into micro-levels. Microlearning presents several benefits to both trainees and organizations:

Microlearning from a business perspective	Microlearning from a learner perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affordable and agile• Simple to create and scale• Quick to develop• Easy to implement and maintain• Flexible and can be easily tailored to specific learning needs• Device agnostic for a wider reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shorter to reinforce continuous learning habits• Bite-sized to be completed in short periods of time• Specific to learning needs• More engaging with different formats (videos, quizzes, etc.)• Short to allow for more time to digest and apply new information• Easy to revise and update

Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom model is one of several blended learning models that combines face-to-face teaching with digital learning methods. The flipped classroom model, however, is particularly helpful for encouraging continuous learning. Consider a traditional classroom setup where face-to-face sessions are used to introduce new material and then learners review what they've learned by completing assignments in their own time. Under the flipped classroom model, learners can learn new material in their own time and utilize face-to-face sessions as a chance to ask follow-up questions and engage in discussion. Therefore, putting the learner in the driver's seat of their own, continuous, growth.

There are five key reasons why the flipped classroom is valued in continuous learning:

Stress reduction– Syncing employees' schedules with the trainer's schedule for a physical class can be a headache and quite costly. The flexibility of a flipped classroom approach allows for a personal study phase without any organizational intervention. Scheduled contact time, in this case, is greatly reduced.

Learner empowerment– Learners gain the advantage of skipping content they are well versed in or may find irrelevant to their needs. The learning track becomes tailored to the specific need of the learner. The pace of learning is left up to the learner.

Active learning – Self-paced and continuous learning is active learning. Moreover, the time spent in-person is better invested in discussions, analysis, and engaging collaborative activities.

Bridge skill gaps – Corporate training today focuses more on bridging the skill gap with regards to the application of concepts rather than the gap in theoretical knowledge. A flipped classroom approach, however, ensures both learning areas are addressed effectively.

Leverages in-house talent – A flipped classroom approach encourages collaboration amongst learners in classroom activities. This allows employees to share their expertise with one-another as, as a result, improve performance. The net effect of leveraging in-house expertise will accelerate the learning process.

Performance support resources for continuous learning

Learning does not end when the training is complete. Quite frequently, there are instances when new learning takes place on the job. Accessible and concise resources of reference become imperative to perform better on the job. These requirements are exclusively skill-oriented and call for just-in-time support and guidance. Performance support resources are a great way to impact return on investment as they reduce errors, increase efficiency, and improve the time taken to respond to critical tasks at work. These different formats, such as job-aids, checklists, and how-to videos, can foster higher engagement and continued learning.

The benefits of these resources include, but are not limited to:

- Easy to access on demand
- Easy to share
- Searchable
- Made up of clear, step-by-step instructions and lists
- Easy to update

The resources are also a great way for employees to access information to allow them to gain further existing expertise in their existing roles and grow and develop into a different role in the company.

Chapter 7

How to create continuous learning content

With a broad understanding of areas and ways continuous learning can be implemented, let us explore the best possible way to create these specific learning assets.

L&D teams usually take a centralized approach to content creation. They reach out to all stakeholders, talk to employees, try to understand the requirement, and then begin the content creation process. However, it has recently come to light that this method might not be the best and most efficient method of content creation for training and learning. E-learning content for courses or assets is usually created by instructional designers under the supervision of subject-matter experts. The instructional designers have a good understanding of the tools available for course creation and are trained in using the most advanced authoring tools. They do not, however, have any domain knowledge that is required to make specific and effective training content. Hence, a lot of handholding by the subject-matter expert is required.

A few of the other problems faced with this method are:

- Content creation takes too long. By the time content is available, it typically needs to be updated
- The centralized team may not have all relevant knowledge available
- The same team is responsible for creating different types of training programs for different business functions, which can take away from personalization
- The conventional method of aligning a centralized team of instructional designers with subject-matter experts is not scalable to meet the ever-increasing speed of business

It is easily discernable that in such a scenario hidden costs may arise, timelines are crossed, and content cannot be updated as and when required. To overcome the challenges of internally scaling instructional design, a common method is to outsource training content development. The learning curve, however, for business requirements is even steeper for a third party. This can eventually increase the delivery time and costs beyond what many organizations can afford.

So, what is the way ahead? How does a company ensure both quantity and quality of content while also keeping costs low and easily being able to update material when needed?

The best approach is to create learning content in-house. By compiling a group of internal experts to collaborate and create bespoke training, all continuous learning needs can be met and exceeded.

Chapter 8

Enable continuous learning through Employee-generated Learning

The availability of creator platforms has ushered in the creator economy to take continuous learning to the next level. In this recent development, anyone with expertise and knowledge worth sharing in an organization can become a content creator. This scenario transforms the role of Learning & Development to become facilitators and enablers of knowledge sharing and learning.

Employees have a wealth of knowledge within and about their organization. This new method empowers employees to unlock their relevant expertise and share it with other employees through Employee-generated Learning (EGL). In turn, it makes the created content more effective and results oriented. The EGL method ensures the knowledge stays where it is generated. It eliminates the time it takes to transfer knowledge from subject-matter experts to instructional designers. It's scalable, easy to use, and allows every employee to work more productively. It's a new way to share knowledge that counts and drives business growth. In addition, it enables continuous learning for both the creator and the learner.

The advantages of such a system include:

- Affordability and scalability
- Increased control at the local level
- Content created in less time
- Increased employee engagement
- Quick response to business challenges and opportunities
- No additional or overhead costs
- Ease of creation
- Content updated at time of need
- Higher performance and satisfaction levels

But the question remains, how can subject-matter experts create quality training content for continuous learning if there is not an easy way to streamline and automate corporate instructional design?

Easygenerator has a solution.

Chapter 9

Easygenerator Solution

Easygenerator offers the perfect solution to get started with EGL. As an easy-to-use, SCORM compatible, and cloud-based authoring tool, it is an ideal solution to create continuous learning content quickly and simply, without needing extensive time-consuming training to master the software. Leveraging EGL and championing the bottom-up approach as its backbone, Easygenerator is key to getting started on the journey for a strong continuous learning program.

Easygenerator makes it easy for employees to choose specific formats as a jumpstart to create assets for continuous learning. With a drag-and-drop interface, e-learning courses that suit the requirement of and encourage continuous learning can be rapidly created. This method allows all content to be created in-house, without the need for intervention from third-party creators.

It is also a known fact that to teach or create content for knowledge sharing, one must learn and research the topic in-depth to internalize restructure the content cognitively. Hence, the culture of knowledge sharing and course creation through EGL enables continuous learning both for the employee who creates content and the employee who uses this content.

Conclusion

For businesses to stay competitive in today's global marketplace, organizations must be ready to innovate, adapt, and be agile. It cannot happen, however, without learning and re-learning continuously at work to gain new perspectives and be ready for change.

Businesses cannot afford to leave this aspect of professional development alone and allow it to take its own course without a strong interventional strategy. Investing in employees' professional growth is the best strategy when compared to bringing in new talent that can prove much more costly in the long term. Employees who are well trained and up to date on their skills are equipped for future challenges and can overcome roadblocks in a structured manner. Organizations that invest in continuous learning keep their learning muscles flexed. They are always ready for changes in the work environment and will continue to feel the positive effects into the future.