



1

WEB-BASED TRAINING PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY AT XYZ

LILY SURIANI MOHD ARIF
DR. AZIZAH RAJAB
SITI FATIMAH BAHARI,
ROZIANA SHAARI

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Fundamental to today's knowledge economy is how organizations foster learning and at the same time obtaining and retaining knowledge from their workers. The rapid pace of change in what workers need to know, the growth of the Internet, and the accelerated global competition, all contribute to the requirement that organisations should efficiently and continuously provide its workers with appropriate and suitable training. As asserted by Wild et.al (2002), training is no longer seen as an extravagance after a good year of profits, but as a necessity in order to keep up with competitors. However, unlike normal practices, sending employees away for training, is no longer practical. This is because according to Hawes (in Matchet, 2002: 24),

even though upgrading skills is essential for our dealers but if they send staff away on long classroom-based courses they know there will be a backlog of work for their staff to deal with by the time they return to the office. It can take people weeks to catch up so it's no surprise both employers and employees are sometimes reluctant to update their knowledge. What we have therefore set out to do is use the best-available technology to reduce the time that people



have to spend out of the office. We are now combining e-learning with classroom-based training so that our dealers can learn about new technology, the latest product developments and accessories in ways that are more convenient to them.

Moreover, it is estimated that 50 percent of all employee skills become outdated within 3 to 5 years. Therefore, to deal with this problem, corporate training budgets will have to be increased (Blake et.al, 2003).

Today's training providers have come up with countless training methods, which are believed to be at par with today's global demand, which places a great emphasis on the use of communication technologies in training as well as emphasis on the application of distance education to training in industry. And this effort is made easier when the development and widespread adoption of global networks and communication protocols have not only made it possible, but economically feasible, to interconnect employees in large and geographically distributed companies to exchange documents and virtually any type of media content. (Anand et.al, 1998)

As Stewart and Winter (1985) have observed, the impetus for growth in the interest in distance education techniques for industry training has come from a perception that training and training methods needs to be responsive to modern and changing work requirements within industry; from government enthusiasm for distance education methods; and the capacity for new information technologies to deliver relevant training in a responsive and interactive way.

However, one major concern that is still worrying organisations as well as training providers is a question of training effectiveness. An information systems/information technology perspective that focused primarily on technological issues dominated much of the early literature and suggested that information communication technology could play a central role in human resource trainings. These literatures have been rightly criticized for over-emphasizing technological issues and for neglecting social and cultural factors, which can lead to a number of problems (Hislop, 2002). For example, Cook and Brown (1999)

highlighted that the intrinsic character of all knowledge makes it extremely difficult to share it using information and communication technologies.

Moreover, there is also a growing evidence that demonstrates communication in web-based learning environment that does not usually facilitate theory based reflections, mostly experience and feeling-based argumentation. For example a study done by Admiraal et.al (1988) in which they found that their respondents used computers conferencing primarily to exchange emotional support, recognised similar experiences of their peers. The study further asserted that synchronous communication was less used for reflecting on their teaching and exchanging pedagogical content knowledge.

WBT AT XYZ

XYZ Malaysia is a branch of an organisation based in Michigan, USA. Its headquarter specializes in production of automobiles as well as production of heavy vehicles. They are the second largest car manufacturers based on their net profit and earnings. It is also credited to be the largest service of the automotives finance supplier. However, in Malaysia, XYZ only specializes in providing finance and leasing services to its clients. Program such as “Quality Care,” “Motor Craft,” and “Extended Service,” are among many services provide by XYZ to support its dealers.

Training at this company can be categorized as core training, supplementary training and for job promotion purposes trainings. Core training is the training essential in developing employees’ knowledge and expertise. This training may differ due to employees different areas of expertise. Supplementary training is training to help enhance employees’ effectiveness. Training such as how to improve one’s communication skill as well as how to manage time and stresses are among the training categorized under supplementary training . And lastly, job promotion purposes training.

These three training methods are given through traditional classroom learning environment. It is conducted either within or outside the organization.

Web-based training is one of the e-learning exercises practice at XYZ. WBT is practiced as a complement to its classroom trainings. However WBT is not made compulsory to all XYZ employees. It is just an incentive created by XYZ to promote continuous learning among its employees.

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of this study are:

1. to determine preferred training method between WBT and traditional training at XYZ.
2. to identify preferred mode of training in WBT between asynchronous and synchronous training.
3. to identify WBT compatibility with three types of trainings namely core training, supplementary and job promotion training.
4. to compare levels of training practices at XYZ between WBT and traditional training method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Web-based training is one form of e-learning, in which it uses the Internet as the medium. In other words, the training contents are published on the net to allow its trainees to access them anytime and from anywhere. The only difference between web-based training and e-learning is that e-learning does not necessarily needs the Internet to function.

There are many approaches to describe WBT. Bryne (2002) for example, contended that the guiding principle behind WBT is that adults like to learn, not to be taught, and are therefore fundamentally constructivist in nature. Adults prefer to explore, conceptualize, experiment and practice in their own ways and in a relevant context. The nature of the Internet is an amorphous environment of information. Useful or otherwise, it allows individuals to search at will and draw connections with information that suits the personal problem and interest being explored.

Kruse (2004) on the other hands, explained WBT by describing it in two categories: synchronous and asynchronous training. Synchronous training is currently a less common form of training. It involves geographically dispersed trainees assessing the web site at the same time as an instructor. Typically, this type of training involves the instructor 'broadcasting' audio out to the trainees through either a teleconference phone call, or through web-based audio. The instructor typically 'drives' a slideshow presentation, which the trainees watch while connected to conference web site. Trainees can ask questions or provide comments through the phone line or through a chat window.

Asynchronous training is more common because it creates a just-in-time, on demand trainees learning experience. Unlike synchronous training, trainees do not need to schedule their time around the predetermined plan of the instructors. There is complete flexibility with asynchronous training, which comes in two forms, facilitated and self paced.

Facilitated asynchronous training involves an instructor and group of trainees, but the interaction is not in real time. The instructor will post assignments on a web page, which typically includes online reading or research conducted on various web sites. Trainees communicate with each other through threaded discussions, which is also known as online bulletin boards. And they can submit their homework to the instructor via e-mail. An advantage of this type of training is that students have a lot of peer interaction, and can receive personalized attention and guidance from human facilitator.

The disadvantage of this form of WBT is that it tends to involve only one type of media, which is the text. Additionally, even though the training is not completed live, trainees still have to be concerned with the schedule. This is because a human facilitator is in charge of arranging assignments and grading homework, hence, some kind of schedule needs to be kept.

Facilitated asynchronous training is common in the academic community, but the most common form of WBT used in corporation is self-paced instruction. This form of delivery consists of stand alone instructional material that can be accessed and completed via the web without additional interaction among students. Material could include guide tutorials, discovery learning simulations, and assessment exercises. Simple WBT programs involved text heavy and look like the original disk-based computer-based training.

Driscoll (2002) and Blake et.al (2003) gave a more refined category of WBT. They categorize WBT into four categories (Blake et.al, 2003, Driscoll 1992): Web/computer based training, Web/electronic performance support system, the Web/virtual asynchronous classrooms and Web/synchronous classrooms. Web/computer-based training is a program loaded on the hard drive or a CD-ROM. The user interacts with only one specific program located on the Internet and does not interact with other students or instructors.

The second method is Web/Electronic Performance Systems. This system is primarily for on-the-job use. Through the Web connection, workers have access to various databases, online tools and discussion forums that help them find solutions to work-based issue. It can be used in both technical and customer service applications and is easily updated to provide employees with the most current information.

The Web/virtual asynchronous classroom is classroom on the Internet. Here, both employees and trainers can interact through e-mail and discussion forums. The class materials can be “handed out” by posting them to a located bulletin board or by uploading lecture files. Assignments may be “handed in” the same way whereas discussion and participation take place at the student’s convenience. Students

and trainers do not have to be online at the same time.

The last type of Web-based delivery system is the Web/virtual synchronous classroom. Via this system the students and trainers do meet together online at a predetermined time. This type of Web-based classroom is closely related to the traditional classroom style. By meeting together at the same time, demonstrations can be displayed to the whole class and direct communication, such as audio and video conferencing may be employed. Kruse and Keil (2000) explained that synchronous is less popular as compared to asynchronous type because it involves participants (trainees and facilitators) to access the same web sites at the same time. In contrast, asynchronous is more popular because of its basic usage and just-in-time method which requires a minimum of low-speed network.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data collected for this study is collected from the 50 employees out of four departments in XYZ. The four departments are the Customer Service, the Human Resource, the Finance and the IT departments. They are chosen because they were identified to have at least tried the WBT twice while working with the company. The questionnaire was divided into four parts: respondents demography, preferred training method, preferred mode of training method, WBT compatibility with three types of training programs, and levels of training practices (WBT vs Traditional). Data were analyzed by using SPSS version 10.0. Descriptive methods such as frequency, mean, percentage were used to analyze the data gathered.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 1: Preferred training method between the WBT and traditional training.

Method of Training Delivery	Frequency	Percentage
WBT	37	74
Traditional Training	13	26

Table 1: Preferred Training Method (N=50)

Findings show that the majority of the respondents (74%) preferred WBT compared to traditional training methods. This is because WBT has much to offer to trainees. Among the advantages of WBT are flexible time, allowing self-paced learning and offering individualised instruction (Amarrudin and Beh, 2005; Blake et. Al., 2003; Elliot, 1999).

Objective 2: Preferred Mode of Training in the WBT (asynchronous and synchronous training)

Delivery Method	Frequency	Percentage
Synchronous	23	46
Asynchronous	27	54

Table 2: Mode of Training (N=50)

Table 2 shows that most of the users (54%) preferred an asynchronous training when participating in WBT. This is contributed by the fact that asynchronous training allows them to decide when or wherever trainees choose to undergo the training program. In other

words trainees do not have to fix a time to communicate or interact with a facilitator or other trainees at the same time. This is due to trainees being restricted to tight working hours and it is difficult for them to find a same or a standard free time in order to communicate (Kruse, 2004). Furthermore, the different time zone between the training provider with XYZ further complicates the situation.

Objective 3: The WBT Compatibility with Three Types of Training (core training, supplementary and job promotion training at XYZ).

Training Types/Suitability Level	Most Suitable	Suitable	Less Suitable
Core Training	27 54.0%	13 26.0%	10 20.0%
Supplementary Training	21 42.0%	8 16.0%	21 42.0%
Job Promotion Training	2 4.0%	29 58.0%	19 38.0%

Table 3: The Compatibility of the WBT With Three Types of Training (N=50)

An assessment of the WBT compatibility with three types of training resulted in some interesting views as shown in Table 3. Table 3 illustrates that the WBT method is perceived to be most suitable in delivering the core training (54%), followed closely

by the supplementary training (42%). However, the same number of percentage of trainees (42%) view WBT as less suitable for supplementary training. This result could be due to the uniqueness of the characteristics among trainees such as their background, experience, and/or age.

Objective 4: Level of Training Practices at XYZ (the WBT and traditional training method).

Mean	Level of Effectiveness
3.67-5.00	Highly Satisfactory
2.34-3.66	Satisfactory
1-2.33	Unsatisfactory

Table 4: Interpretation of the Training Practices Level

Item Measured	Mean WBT	Traditional Training
Excellent design of the training program	3.64	3.04
Effective delivery of all the learning content	3.60	2.86
Achieve the needs of employee	3.68	3.36
Achieve the satisfaction of employee	3.42	3.16
Full support from the top management	3.32	2.7
Useful in job promotion	3.10	3.46

Low participation cost	4.06	3.00
No additional cost	4.12	2.84
Flexible time	4.26	2.68
Flexible venue	4.24	2.78
Easy to follow	3.26	2.90
Useful in my career development	3.86	3.18
Use an easy and understood language	4.52	3.46
Able to understand all the learning contents	4.10	3.26
Able to transfer knowledge and skill into daily tasks	3.80	3.18
Average Mean	3.80	3.06

Table 5: The Respondents' Perceptions towards the Practices Level of WBT Training and Traditional Training (N= 50)

Table 5 illustrates comparison made between the WBT and traditional training method, which indicates that the WBT implementation is regarded as highly satisfactory. Nevertheless, traditional training methods will continue to be a significant part of corporate training for many years to come. It may be practical to use learning technology to achieve some goals and traditional method to achieve others. This study concludes that each company will have to decide on their own what are their learning architectural styles, in order to meet their primary corporate objective. They also have to decide how much will be automated and how much will remain traditional (Byrne, 2002).

CONCLUSION

They study conducted on 50 employees of XYZ resulted in the WBT as the preferred training program compared to the traditional method. Similarly, asynchronous training program is more applicable and preferable to these employees. Results also indicated that WBT is also the most suitable training program in conducting the core training because it can be conducted at trainees own time, may it be in their own homes or offices. In conclusion no single training method is superior to all others. The nature of the materials to be presented, the number of persons to be trained, the background, the ability of the trainees, the kind and amount of equipment available, the time that can be devoted to training, and the anticipated results, must all be considered when determining the best method for a particular training program.

REFERENCES

- A. Abid, A. Mueen, C.K. Chong, and M.K. Tan (2005). The E-University: From E-Training to E-Learning. In Proceeding of International Conference on E-Commerce 2005. January 10-11, The Summit Hotel, Subang USJ, Selangor. 272-278
- Admiraal et.al (1998) Computer Mediated Communication in Teacher Education: Computer Conferencing and the Supervision of student teachers. Journal of Learning Environment Research. Vol 1, 59-74
- Amirrudin Kamsin and Beh, Y.Y (2005). Is e-Learning the Solution and Substitute for Conventional Learning? In Proceeding of International Conference on E-Commerce 2005. January 10-11, The Summit Hotel, Subang USJ, Selangor. 279-285
- Anand, V., Charles, C.M. and William, H.G. (1998). An Organization Memory Approach to Information Management. Academy of

- Management Review. Vol: 23(4), 796-809.
- Blake et.al (2003) Web-Based Training: What Supervisors Need to Know. Supervision. Vol 64 (12), 3-8.
- Byrne, Roger (2002) Web-Based learning Versus Traditional Management Development Methods. Singapore Management Review. Vol 24, Issue 2, 59-69
- Cook, S. and Brown, J. (1999). Bridging epistemologies: The Generative Dance between Organizational Knowledge and Organizational Knowing. *Organization Science*, 10(4), 381-400.
- Driscoll, M. (2002). *Web-Based Training*. 2nd ed. USA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer
- Elliot, T. (1999). *Web-Based Training: Is It Right For You? Applied Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*. Vol 14(10), 659-660.
- Kruse, K. and Keil. J. (2000). *Technology-Based Training*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer.
- Hanafizan Hussain, Roslan Ismail and Maqsood Ahmad (1999). Distance Education Through Internet. In Harris R.W. Conference on IT in Asia: Proceedings of CITA 1999. Kuching: International Federation for Information Processing.
- Feely, A.J. and Harzing, A.W. (2003). Language Management in Multinational Company. *Journal of Global Communication*. Vol: 10(2), 37-52.
- Matchett, J (2002). "Toshiba Builds Dealer Skills Through Electronic And Classroom-Based Learning." *Human Resource Management International Digest*. - 10(1), 23-25.