

A Workshop, Webinar or What?

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There are a number of challenges organizations face when rolling out company wide initiatives across the globe. Cost, culture, language, and technology are a few of the major considerations everyone must face. Sending a message from the president to all employees around the world isn't hard, but communicating it in a way that is consistently understood is where things get troublesome. Imagine the challenges facing multinational organizations in rolling out a two day workshop about Effective Communication or one on Conducting Effective Performance Reviews. Or, how should new employees get up to speed on the company and learn about the products? With all of the technology, delivery methods and cultural implications, how does one determine the best way to accomplish the organization's goals for learning and development?

This article takes a look at some of the different ways to accomplish these goals as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages for each. We'll look at the following options:

- Conduct a face to face workshop there (where the participants work)
- Conduct a face to face workshop here (where the headquarter is located)
- Train the Trainer
- Master Trainer simultaneous workshops
- Virtual Training

Face to Face Workshop There

In this option, facilitators (either internal employees or contractors) go on the road and take the workshop to their audiences around the globe.

Advantages

- Content can be customized and adapted to meet the needs of different audiences and cultures
- Facilitators can pick up on learning transfer success and react/adjust as needed on the fly
- Traveling to the various locations helps to learn about customers and/or audience culture
- Employees feel valued because they are getting the same treatment as corporate does, but on their own turf
- Getting to know leaders and people from corporate can help instill loyalty, foster shared understanding, and create the desired culture

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- Typically there may be more learning and skills transfer and team building in a workshop versus other methods
- Contractors can be hired if internal resources are an issue or aren't available to do the work

Disadvantages

- Facilitators may encounter inconsistent facility or technology at the various locations which makes it hard for consistent delivery of content
- Employees attending training in their office facility may be distracted with emails, phone calls and other job responsibilities
- Travel takes facilitators and leaders out of their office which could impact other work
- Language barriers or culture differences may affect the delivery of content
- Financial costs of travel abroad are high
- Travel, preparation and repeated facilitation takes its toll on facilitators

Face to Face Workshop Here

This option brings employees to the corporate headquarters location to participate in the face to face workshop.

Advantages

- The employees feel valued by being brought to “corporate”
- Being at the corporate location is a great opportunity to learn or reinforce the culture of the company
- Employee relationship building with corporate staff is likely to occur. This helps bridge the “geographic gap.”
- Typically there may be more learning and skills transfer and team building in a workshop versus other methods (for skill-based or relationship-based learning content)

Disadvantages

- Financial costs of employee travel may be cost-prohibitive depending on the size of the company and number of employees attending the workshop
- Need to factor in the lead time, expense and potential restrictions for obtaining passports/visas required for travel
- Employees travel takes them out of their office which could impact other work
- Fatigue factor (such as jetlag) or culture shock could affect learners
- Participants could experience language barriers even when everyone speaks English

Train the Trainer

This scenario has several options. One would be for Master Trainers (experts on the workshop and in training trainers) can travel to train additional facilitators on the content and in the techniques needed to actually facilitate the workshop.

Another variation includes facilitators (perhaps managers or subject matter experts) who will be facilitating the workshop coming to the corporate headquarters and attending a Train the Trainer session to learn the content and facilitation techniques.

A third variation of this option would be to train independent facilitators and have them partner with in country employees to roll out the workshop. The independent facilitator would most likely be an expert in the content, while the in country co-facilitator would be an expert in the company and the culture. Working together, this team could support each other to deliver a successful workshop.

Advantages

- More people will know the content and can help spread the word
- Content can be localized and customized to better meet the needs of the learners
- With more facilitators and people versed in the content, the odds of having champions and follow up for the initiative/training is greater
- May be the most cost effective in terms of time and money (versus sending all employees to another country to take the training or having a few corporate facilitators trying to do all the workshops abroad)
- Roll out could be completed in a shorter timeframe with more people trained to deliver it

Disadvantages

- Quality and consistency may be reduced when newly trained facilitators are delivering around the globe
- Management support and follow-up may reduced unless leaders voice and show support
- The newly trained facilitators will likely not be dedicated resources, so mind share and skills may be an issue

Yet another variation of the Train the Trainer includes a Master Trainer/Satellite option. In this case, a Master Trainer would be in one location and there could be several groups in attendance around the world. For an example, the Master Trainer is located in New York and there are groups of employees in India ready to be trained (let's say in Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai). Each satellite meeting room with a facilitator is connected to the Master Trainer via video conference or web cast. The Master Trainer opens the session, greets participants and presents the first module of content. When an assignment is given the local facilitators take over and lead the group through the assignment. When the assignment is complete, the entire group reconvenes and the local facilitators offer some comments, insights or questions from their group. The Master Trainer handles those and moves onto the next module. This approach continues for the duration of the training. This method works well when the organization needs a level of continuity in the training.

What about logistics? The New Yorker will likely start the session at 8:00 p.m. eastern time so the learners in India can participate during their work day. If this is an eight hour

workshop, consider breaking it up into four to five segments to give participants and facilitators time to take a break.

What about getting the facilitators in synch? The local facilitators need to be trained on the content, what to expect and their roles during the session. As you guessed, this can be done with the Master Trainer presenting the material in advance to facilitator groups across one country or across different countries. Be sure to account for differing time zones when planning this facilitator preparation session.

Virtual Training

This option could include presenting content via live or recorded webcasts, and/or e-learning.

Advantages

- Cost efficient in that e-learning typically saves money with large audiences as compared to incurring travel costs for participants
- Webcasts can be recorded and repeated by the same or different learner audiences
- Electronic media events can reach greater audiences for each event
- This delivery method is convenient for all involved (no travel required)
- Significant time advantage for participants due to not having to travel

Disadvantages

- Company's values and culture may not be passed along as easily as during face to face training delivery methods
- Retention and learning transfer may be compromised (particularly for skills training unless practice exercises are included)
- To accommodate differing time zones, the Master Trainer may need to work during unusual hours if facilitating a live webinar
- The content may not be sensitized and localized for varied cultures, unless different versions are created.
- Technology challenges could be daunting
- Not all learning styles/learners respond best to virtual training methods

This is just a very quick review of some methods and some of their strengths and weaknesses. It is not intended to be complete, but is intended to help you think about considerations when designing learning events for global audiences. Each of these options has on its own has a particular strength and can be combined with other methods to provide a strong blended learning event. When it comes time to decide on a method, look to the objectives of the learning event to help choose the best option. Keep in mind there are no wrong choices. The key is, whatever choice you make, do it well!

Renie has managed the training function for several Fortune 500 companies, including Kraft, Gerber, and Pactiv (makers of Hefty). After 20 years in corporate training and

development roles, she started her own firm, Inspired Learning LLC. She presents to corporate, academic, and non-profit audiences and has a reputation for being fun, lively, and entertaining – as well as informative. Her presentations to groups are considered “EnterTrainment” – an innovative blend of training and entertainment.

Loving to travel, Renie has been to over 30 countries and enjoys getting to know new cultures. Her audiences have included people across the globe from Australia, Europe, China, India, Middle East, Latin America and North America.

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Currently, Renie is Adjunct Faculty for Roosevelt University, Chicago. She is also the author of *10 Steps to Successful Teams* (ASTD Press), *Sales Training Solutions* (Kaplan), co-author of *The Essential Guide to Training Global Audiences* (Pfeiffer), *Fortify Your Sales Force: Leading and Training Exceptional Teams* (Pfeiffer). She also consults on a wide variety of sales and learning initiatives and is a facilitator for American Management Association courses. She is a Certified Professional of Learning and Performance (CPLP) and has a Masters in Global Talent Development from DePaul University.