



THE GMarie GROUP
Performance Improvement Specialists

Virtual Instructor Led Training

Cost Effectiveness of the Virtual Classroom

October 2008

Provided by:
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Overview

Virtual instructor led training (VILT) refers to the synchronous (same time) delivery of training content in a simulated online classroom environment, typically over the Internet and phone. VILT delivers the learning benefits of traditional instructor-led training to the desktop, while giving you the cost benefits of e-learning. Expert-led training over the Web can achieve the same level of knowledge transfer and interactivity as traditional instructor-led training while offering additional advantages learners can not get with any other training. VILT is used in many organizations as an important learning channel that supplements traditional classroom training and e-learning.

Training organizations continue to seek ways to gain efficiencies, increase access to learning and decrease costs. According to the American Society for Training and Development's (ASTD) Industry Report for 2007, organizations designated as BEST organizations (those receiving BEST awards), gained efficiencies by restructuring the learning environments to include greater use of virtual classrooms. They were able to train hundreds of employees simultaneously, thereby greatly increasing the number of training days provided with the same number of training staff.

Cost effectiveness of VILT

Positive results of using VILT have been reported by organizations including Sun Microsystems, Toyota Canada, the U.S. Air Force in Europe (USAFE) and a large pharmaceutical company.

Sun Microsystems was experiencing a drop in instructor-led training revenues, which reflected an overall decrease in demand for traditional classroom training. Sun explored methods to increase productivity for their training customers by reducing travel days required for "live" training.

Sun implemented a robust VILT system that includes online labs in which participants share their lab windows with an online instructor who monitors their progress and can take control of the window for "hands on"

training. Using Elluminate *Live*®, the instructor can also send groups of learners to virtual breakout rooms for small group project work.

According to the virtual classroom program manager, "...the ROI is tremendous for our LVC [live virtual class] initiative. For example, we have Elluminate Live! licenses for 50 seats. First, you have to keep in mind that these seats can be used worldwide 24 hours a day, so when compared with the cost of travel, it's a bargain. In addition, we can also retire our expensive training facilities. We consider LVC a very cost-effective way to get our training out there, and we can provide an experience very similar to the traditional classroom environment, but even more flexible. It's exactly what our customers want because training enrollments are really taking off."

Another example of the cost effectiveness of VILT comes from a case study of the HP Virtual Classroom used by Toyota Canada as a learning channel for its national dealer network.

The VILT replaces costly onsite training and greatly reduces travel time and associated costs as well as lost productivity. A company spokesperson estimated cost savings to the corporate office at more than \$7.5 million with an annual cost of \$20,000 for use of the Virtual Classroom. She says: "It's really a compelling business case. The return on investment — more than 350 times the annual cost — is astounding." There are other benefits as well; training takes place more quickly than with traditional onsite programs, which decreases speed to competence with new product information.

A third example of the cost effectiveness of VILT comes from the United States Air Force in Europe (USAFE), which transitioned many of its traditional training efforts to VILT in 2006. By replacing costly Temporary Duty assignments TDY to training locations with VILT, USAFE saved on average \$5,800 per course and realized savings of over \$794,000 at the time of their report. Savings to train 137 students through VILT versus sending them back to the United States three times per year for training is reported to save the Air Force more than \$2.3 million.

A final example of cost savings comes from a study reported by a VILT provider for a large pharmaceutical company. The organization reported

in 2005 that by replacing traditional classroom training with VILT, training costs were reduced by 70% per student, while accessibility to training was greatly expanded; up to 100,000 students were able to access the training worldwide.

Learning effectiveness

While VILT has been shown to be cost effective, you may wonder about its effectiveness as a learning methodology. Research studies show that there are no real differences between learning in traditional classroom settings or through online learning with the right emphasis on design.

Developing and delivering VILT requires sound instructional designs that make best use of the technology to make the learning experience interactive and engaging for the remote learner. Some of the many strategies we use include:

- Assigning engaging pre-work that the participants bring to the session and share with others
- Using the polling features to keep the learner engaged, assess learning, gather opinions, etc.
- Using the online group chat feature for “quick draw” responses to questions
- Assigning learners to small breakout sessions in which learners make a plan or solve a problem and share it with the whole group

The GMarie Group

For over 20 years, The GMarie Group has provided nationwide clients with custom learning and performance improvement solutions. To do so, we apply the ADDIE Model, a systematic process for:

Analyzing Performance and Training Needs

The GMarie Group recommends initiating a project through rigorous analysis, which is the key to obtaining valid results and ensuring that a significant cross-section of the organization has a stake in the process. We can conduct training needs and performance analysis to determine learning solutions to address identified performance gaps.

Designing and Developing Effective Solutions

We design and develop online (Web-based) training, virtual Webcasts, podcasts, instructor-led training, performance support tools, learning portals and much more! Our team can author your custom product using any industry-standard authoring tool (e.g. Flash, Lectora, Flypaper and Captivate).

Implementing Products and Programs

We also provide training program planning and coordination, train-the-trainer, training delivery and facilitation for all types of subject matter. We can also help integrate Web-based solutions into your LMS or LCMS.

Evaluating Reactions, Learning, Skills Transfer and Returns

Using Kirkpatrick's "Four Levels of Evaluation," we develop tools and scoring mechanisms to measure participant reactions to learning, mastery of objectives, transfer of skills to the job and return-on-objectives and investment.

How Can We Help YOU?

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