Training:

A Critical Success Factor in Implementing a Technology Solution

WHITE PAPER

Radiant® SYSTEMS

Overview

"The ultimate competitive advantage lies in an organization's ability to learn and rapidly transform that learning into action."

-Jack Welch

In order to gain the greatest return on investment from any technology implementation, end users must understand how to use the product to its fullest capabilities. Delivering the right training at the right time requires choosing a learning approach that will move an organization toward its strategic objectives and then deploying the training as effectively as possible. This document discusses a recommended training approach that will allow an organization to deliver effective training to a distributed enterprise at a reasonable cost, maximizing the benefits of implementing any technology solution.

A Blended Learning Model

In the past, training has typically been delivered in an instructor-led format in classrooms or on the job and has not been scalable in terms of cost, resources, and time away from the job. As a result, most organizations have struggled with delivering training to as many people and for the appropriate duration as was truly needed to achieve the greatest benefit.

With the advent of technology-based training, many early adopters have attempted to replace instructor-led training with this new form of learning. While there were many advantages to this first phase of online learning, there were some limitations that diminished its effectiveness, such as lack of collaboration with other learners, inability to simulate complex exercises, and limited tools to track and measure results.

As technology has improved and lessons have been learned from this first phase of online learning, a new training model has evolved called "blended learning." A blended learning model is one that incorporates a variety of delivery styles and accommodates different organizational needs to achieve the most effective knowledge transfer. An example of this for a retail organization rolling out a new technology solution might include a combination of classroom training for point-of-sale and change management topics, e-learning used to deliver software training, practice, and testing, and a learning management system utilized to post job aids, schedule courses, and track attendance and results for all training events.

Developing a blended approach to learning serves several objectives, including:

- Accommodating a variety of different learning styles, ensuring individuals receive the most effective training for each type of content
- Allowing training to be rolled out over a period of time so that each phase of learning is reinforced by the next
- Capitalizing on the latest technology initiatives in the training arena, maximizing the training dollar, and delivering first-hand training to a larger audience than ever before
- Facilitating consistent training throughout the technology lifecycle, allowing new employees to receive the same training as those who were trained during the initial implementation
- Providing a vehicle to deliver training for future technology upgrades

The following table outlines the different learning styles of a typical training audience, the suggested mode that meets the learning style, and the content that is best delivered via that mode:

Targeted Content	Learning Style	Delivery Style	Delivery Mode(s)
• Pre-implementation communications • Job aids • Online help	Visual	Informational	• Post content on a learning management system, portal, or company intranet • Email • Printed materials
• Product introduction • Application training & software simulations • Business processes	Interactive	Self-paced (Asynchronous)	• Web-based training • Computer-based training
• Change management topics • POS training • Business processes • Shared best practices • Troubleshooting	Collaborative	Facilitated (Synchronous)	• Virtual Classroom • Live Classroom • On-the-Job

A learning approach that includes a blend of learning styles allows training administrators to distribute and learners to absorb relevant knowledge efficiently, quickly, and at the least cost to the organization. In short, developing a blended approach trains employees faster and better, shortening the time before the organization begins recognizing a return on their technology investment.

Focusing the Training Investment

In addition to learning style, there are several other factors to consider when determining the training approach that is best suited for the program being developed. These factors include learner population, the technical level of the content, average employee tenure in that role, and geographic distribution of the learners.

Learner Population

In general, the larger the audience, the more scalable the training program needs to be. A highly scalable training program might consist of a combination of e-learning and instructor-led training where the basic content is covered in e-learning and instructor-led training is utilized to address collaborative, high impact items such as business process change and sharing of best practices.

Technical Level of Content

Typically, the more basic the content, the easier it is to develop training in a variety of formats. As content becomes more technical in nature – for example, when training the help desk or system administrators – so does the need to incorporate more detailed hands-on simulations. While these can be addressed via e-learning, the cost to do so may be prohibitive.

Average Employee Tenure

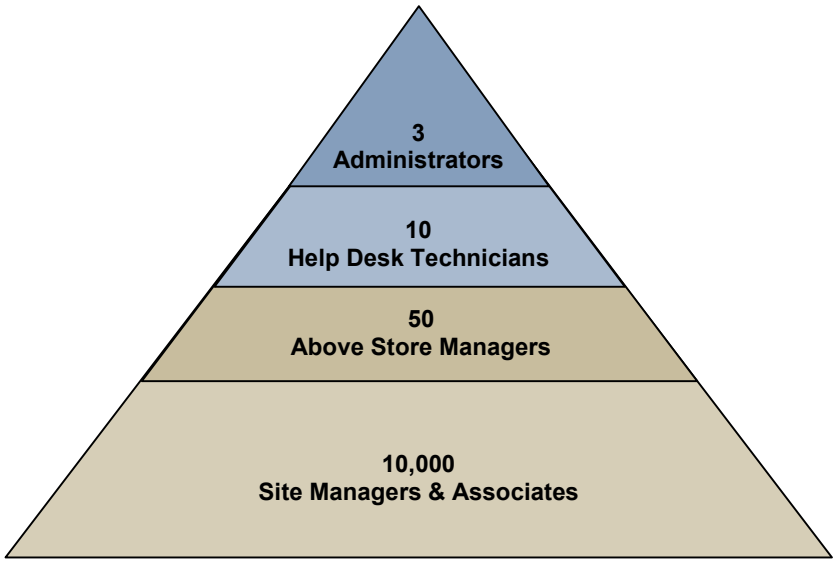
The more frequently an organization needs to deliver training for a particular role, the more scalable that training will need to be. Designing e-learning for a small group of administrators who stay with the company for a long time will not generate as much return on that investment as developing e-learning for ever-changing site personnel.

Geographic Distribution

Travel costs associated with delivering classroom training to a widely distributed learner population can be enormous, and such an audience can benefit greatly from centralized, consistent training whether delivered via e-learning or a virtual classroom.

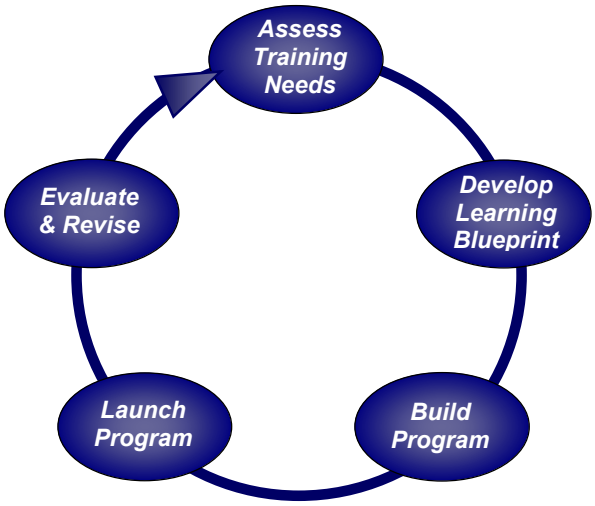
When considering all of these factors together, businesses will want to develop a program that provides "the most bang for the buck." While the number of learners may be different for any given organization, the training investment, both in time and dollars, should mirror the example below with the largest investment being made for the largest learner population:

General Retail Example
Learners by Role



Building the Right Program

Building and maintaining a learning program is an ongoing process. Organizations will need to address each of the following learning phases and their associated activities to develop the program that best meets their needs:



Assess Training Needs

A learning approach should take many factors into consideration including previous training successes, learning style and aptitude of the learners, and resources available. Conducting a thorough assessment of an organization's training needs will identify key factors that will maximize learning success and support the creation of a training program that is aligned with overall business goals.

Develop a Learning Blueprint

After conducting a careful assessment of the organization's specific needs, developing a learning approach framework or "blueprint" will serve as a strategic and tactical plan to drive the creation of a training program that meets these needs. Some areas to cover when developing the blueprint are:

- **Learning goals** based on business and program objectives
- **Key stakeholders** of the learning program from executive sponsorship to site-level learners
- **Readiness of the organization** to implement a learning program, including the ability to adapt to change and the technical infrastructure to support the learning initiative

- **Curriculum definition** for any learner groups requiring training on the technology solution. Depending on the organization's needs, these groups might include:
    - Site Personnel
    - Above-Store Management
    - Instructors
    - System Administrators
    - Help Desk
    - Installers
- **Implementation plan** for rolling out the learning program, by learner group, that is aligned with available resources and the overall program implementation timeline. Included in this plan are many logistics to consider such as:
    - *Location* – If the training program includes use of an instructor-led component, will it take place in classrooms or on-site?
    - *Timing* – For classroom training, are events planned to occur "just-in-time" so that employees are neither trained too far in advance nor too close to the go-live date? For e-learning, does the rollout incorporate time to learn before the go-live date?
    - *Resources* – Are the appropriate hardware and software components for classroom training, including computers, a training database, networking equipment and point-of-sale systems, available? Will the organization deliver training directly to its end-users or will it partner with the solution vendor or a third party company to deliver site-level training? For e-learning, will students have access to a computer with Internet access prior to the go-live date?
- **Measurement plan** including an approach and metrics that will track the overall success of the training initiative and its alignment with business goals
- **Risks** to the program to bring awareness to potential barriers and an outline of steps to mitigate them and enable prioritization of each component of the training program

Build the Learning Program

Using the blueprint as a guideline, organizations will begin to develop all components of the training program. Depending on the curriculum selected, the level of customization required, and the associated delivery mode, certain development activities will need to be performed including:

- Custom training program design for instructors, site managers, help desk technicians, or installers
- Content development including customization of standard e-learning courses and training materials
- Curriculum mapping of e-learning courses by role
- Employee profile configuration for users of the Learning Management System by role
- General set-up and curriculum configuration of the Learning Management System
- Go-live operations support program design

Launch the Program

Once training program development is completed, it is time to pilot the approach. The training pilot typically serves as the training program for the program's alpha & beta sites.

Evaluate & Revise

Following the pilot, organizations will want to incorporate any necessary adjustments into the approach for rollout of the full program. One good way to note the adjustments to be made is by keeping a log throughout the pilot phase. However, evaluation of the effectiveness of the program should not stop here; it should be an ongoing process throughout the rollout to ensure that the training program is on target and that overall program and business objectives are being met.

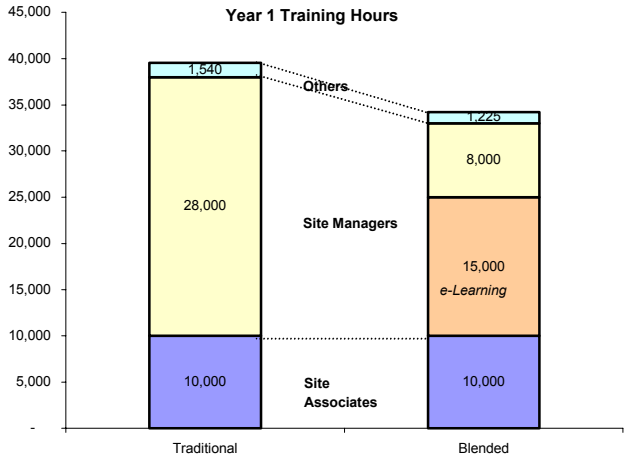
Training Strategy Over Time

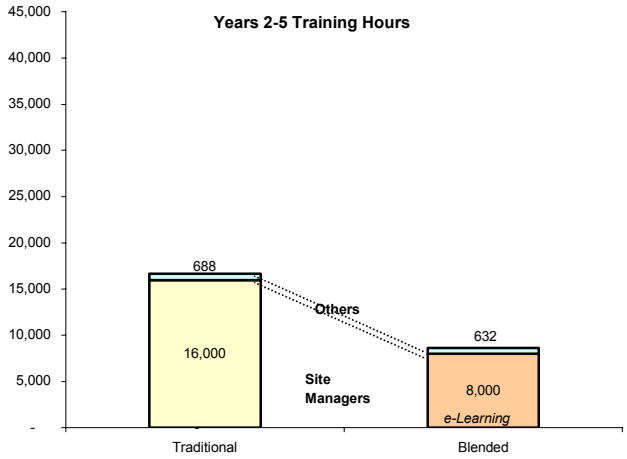
The training strategy will likely be different for an initial rollout of the technology solution than for ongoing product training. The following table, using training for a point-of-sale and Web-based back-office system as an example, outlines how each phase might look and compares the learning times of traditional training (instructor-led training (ILT) only) with a blended approach:

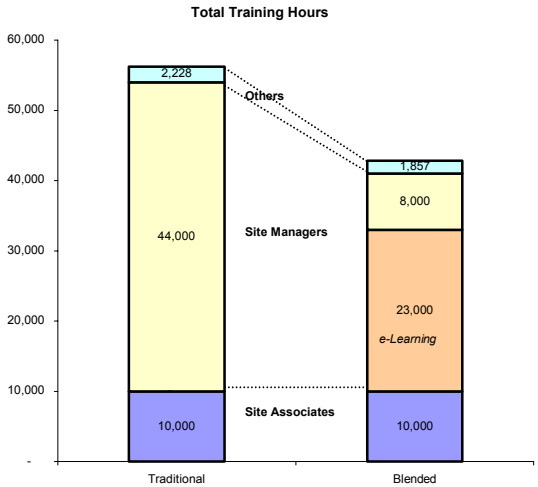
Learner Group *	**Training Program Year 1** *(Estimated Seat Time: ILT/e-Learning)*	**Training Program Years 2- 5** *(Estimated Seat Time: ILT/e-Learning)*
Site Associates	• POS Training (1 hr/NA)	• NA
Site Managers	• Product Training (20 hrs/15 hrs) • Change Management & Business Process Training (2 hrs) • POS Training (2 hrs)	• Upgrades to Functionality (4 hrs/ 2hrs)
Above Store Managers	• Product Training (6 hrs/4hrs) • Change Management & Business Process Training (2 hrs)	• Upgrades to Functionality (2 hrs/1 hr)
Help Desk Technicians	• Product Training (20 hrs/15hrs) • Configuration & Administration Training (40 hrs) • Troubleshooting (16 hrs)	• Upgrades to Functionality (4 hrs/ 2hrs)
Database Administrators	• Product Training (20 hrs/15 hrs) • Configuration & Administration Training (40 hrs)	• Upgrades to Functionality (4 hrs/ 2hrs)

* Assume first year training program would be same for all new hires in subsequent years. Training program for years 2-5 shows content & seat time for existing employees only.

The following tables provide a comparison of training hours by audience between an instructor-led training approach and a blended training approach.







Blended Approach Cost Savings

$2,854,200	Travel & expenses, classroom rental, instructor costs, and training manuals production & distribution
$133,710	Reduction in training hours
$2,987,910	**Total over 5 yrs**

Making Technology Work

One of the advantages of a blended approach is the ability to incorporate technology tools into the training program. The following are some general categories where organizations can use technology to enhance an overall training program and recognize some of the benefits identified in the previous sections.

Content

With the advent of e-learning, the ability to train an unlimited number of learners simultaneously with a limited number of resources becomes a reality. However, just because it is possible does not necessarily mean it will be effective. Distributing online training that neither effectively imparts the right knowledge nor engages the learner will not produce the expected end result – a well-trained staff. And the way an organization develops e-learning for software versus soft skills will differ. In general, e-learning courses that provide training on software should:

- present the objectives for the lesson
- deliver instruction that explains the business relevance (the why) in addition to the steps to complete a task (the how)
- provide an opportunity to practice those steps through guided simulations and exercises that deliver feedback
- prove the learner's comprehension of the lesson through a quiz that is scored and tracked

For general subjects or standard software training courses where no company specific business processes are required to be covered, off-the-shelf content is viable and the least expensive option. When custom training is required, however, companies have had to turn to creating content from scratch at a very high cost. Due to the limitations of off-the-shelf content and the cost prohibitive nature of custom content, a hybrid solution to developing e-learning courses has evolved called "mass customization." In this approach, standard courses are modified to reflect an organization's specific business processes, achieving the impact of custom courseware without the associated elevated price tag.

Training Mode

Another useful technology training tool is a training mode of the software that allows users to practice in a real software setting without impacting their actual business environment. By utilizing training exercises or workbooks around specific examples found in this training database, learners are free to experiment with the software in an unguided manner, yet know if they have achieved the desired outcome by verifying their result against the training workbook. In order to make the exercises useful on an ongoing basis rather than for just a single training event, the training mode should be "frozen" at a particular date that corresponds with the dates written in the training exercises (e.g., "create a schedule for the week of June 12th" or "receive inventory for the week of June 20th"). Additionally, this training database should automatically reset to a baseline dataset, allowing exercises to be completed numerous times by a variety of learners throughout the solution lifecycle.

Learning Management System

A learning management system can automate many manual tasks and provide significant related cost savings in areas such as producing and distributing training materials, scheduling and tracking training events, and assessing the proficiency level of an organization. When used to manage learning in a technology implementation, this tool can greatly reduce the time and resources required to deliver effective training as well as to determine the organization's ability to use the software effectively. Through reports and alerts, training administrators can also gauge the impact of specific courses on employee performance and make adjustments as required for individuals or user groups.

Conclusion

Critical Decisions

Before finalizing the training strategy, the organization will need to formulate responses to these critical questions:

- What training delivery modes will the organization use? For which audiences?
- If using classroom training, will it be regional or will learners travel to one location?
- How will the organization map the overall training program to the program implementation?
- What tool will the organization use to launch the e-learning content?
- Who will develop the initial training materials including manuals and e-learning courses? Who will maintain it moving forward?
- How will the organization determine training success?

Success Factors

There are many critical steps in developing and executing a successful learning program. The following is a list of a few of the top actions to ensure the success of the program:

> *Research tells us as high as 50-75% of technology implementations fail to produce their expected return… It is not about the hardware or the software; it is about the people and processes.*
>
> -Gartner Group

- Conducting a thorough analysis and developing a training plan leads to the most efficient and effective learning solutions
- Using a blended approach to training including classroom training, synchronous and asynchronous online training, and printed materials supports training for a widely distributed and changing audience
- Developing e-learning content that is interactive, relevant to the audience, and includes the whys as well as the hows will keep learners engaged and increase overall knowledge retention
- Marketing the e-learning through a variety of mediums prepares and excites users for the new methods of training delivery
- Allowing adequate time for e-learning on the job and ensuring managers support this type of learning increases the completion rate for self-paced learning
- Tracking results and tying to performance reviews holds learners accountable no matter what delivery mode is selected
- Providing adequate technical and operational support during training and after go-live for end users decreases frustration

How Can Radiant Help?

No matter what learning program an organization ultimately chooses to develop and deploy, Radiant can help make that program successful. For organizations implementing the Radiant 6e™ solution, the following products and services are available to assist in the creation of the training program:

e-Learning Products

- **Learning Management System** – a centralized repository integrated with the Radiant Enterprise Productivity Suite that allows the addition, scheduling, and tracking of training courses and associated employee performance.
- **e-Courses** – self-guided online learning courses providing instruction and testing on Radiant software. These standard courses can be implemented as-is or modified to reflect specific business processes and product configuration.

e-Learning Services

- **e-Learning Requirements Definition Workshop** – interactive workshop during which Radiant and the Client will define all requirements for the e-Learning implementation, including user roles, system configuration requirements, any custom development requirements, and a high-level project plan for moving forward.
- **Curriculum Mapping** – providing alignment of Radiant 6e curriculums with existing user curriculums, as well as complete design of user curriculums by role.
- **Performance Management Design** – identification and design of parameters associated with user performance criteria.
- **Custom Development** – custom software development including custom course content development and programming, workflow design & development, report design & development, integration of non-Radiant online courses with the Radiant Learning Management System (LMS), integration of Radiant 6e e-Learning courses with non-Radiant LMS, or integration of the Radiant LMS with other online tools.
- **Solution Configuration** – system configuration of data within Radiant 6e and the Radiant LMS, including configuration of employee profiles and security access (based on roles), configuration of curriculums and course parameters, and configuration of administrative the LMS.
- **Training & Certification** – includes a Learning Administrator Training & Certification program, an Above-Store Awareness Program and Site Manager Awareness Program to ensure Above-Store users and Site Managers are prepared to begin using the e-Learning Solution to learn the application.
- **e-Learning Pilot Planning & Deployment** – design and management of the e-Learning pilot strategy for a Client's initial implementation.
- **Go-Live Operations Support & Assessment** – escalated expert support made available during the Go-Live period, including a follow-up assessment and recommendations for improvement.

Training & Certification Programs (by Role)

The following matrix identifies the types of programs by user roles as well as the individual components that make up a complete program. Topics and duration of each training component will vary to reflect the solution being implemented. Program descriptions for each of the individual courses can be provided upon request.

	Product Awareness				Product						Technology										Practical Application				Hardware Installation			Resource Certification				Environment Certification			
	Product Review	Product Capabilities	Technology Summit	Developer Summit	Front of House	Site Management	Above Store Management	Product Configuration	Pricebook Administration	Support Tools and Troubleshooting	Enterprise Technology	Site Technology	Data Modeling	Workflow Development	Alert Development	Report Development	Data Exports	Data Imports	Interface Development	Trainer Workshop	Configuration Workshop	Development Workshop	Support OJT Workshop	Installation Observation	Hardware Installation	Hardware Maintenance	Instructor Certification	Hosting Engineer Certification	Installation Evaluation	Installation Verification	Support Infrastructure Assessment	Support Startup Evaluation	Hosting Infrastructure Certification
Site Employee Training Package					X																													
Site Manager Training Package					X	X																												
Above Store Manager Training Package					X	X	X																											
Site Manager Instructor Certification Package					X	X					X									X							X				X		
Super User Instructor Certification Package					X	X	X				X									X							X				X		
System Administrator Training Package								X				X									X													
Pricebook Manager Training Package									X																									
Application Extension Developer Training Package													X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X												
Report Developer Training Package													X			X						X												
Hosting Engineer Training Package											X	X																X						X
Support Technician Certification Package					X	X				X																					X	X		
Support Technician Instructor Certification Package					X	X				X										X											X	X		
Hardware Technician Certification Package																									X									
Hardware Technician Instructor Certification Package																				X					X	X								
Installation Technician Certification Package																								X	X				X	X				
Installation Technician Instructor Certification Package																				X				X	X		X		X	X				

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