

VIRTUAL TRAINING

Best practices for training staff in a digital climate



KEY POINTS

**INVEST IN TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**KEEP LEARNERS
ENGAGED ONLINE**

**UTILIZE EXISTING
HIGHER EDUCATION
PROGRAMS**

**KEEP THINGS
EFFICIENT**

COLUMBUS
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

What is happening now?

Our current business environment has necessitated the move to virtual spaces, including the delivery of training and upskilling staff. In the last several years, many businesses have successfully migrated training offerings from in-person classrooms to virtual platforms.

Online courses that focus on IT, customer service, and soft skill development have been around for over 25 years.

However, with the onset of the pandemic, many learning and development professionals are now tasked with finding alternative routes to delivering quality employee education in all disciplines.

Continued...

It can be tempting to neglect staff development in times of crisis, as we are now experiencing. From COVID-19 to social unrest, many business leaders are overwhelmed with daily developments that consume their energy. Investing in training and development shouldn't fall victim to the crisis.

Now is exactly the right time to establish new learning habits, when so much has to be rearranged anyway. Take the time to inventory your current training offerings and determine if they still provide value to your organization. Are the learning outcomes aligned to your strategic plan? Can they be updated and migrated to alternative delivery methods, or should they be eliminated altogether?

Now is the right time to bring your company into the world of virtual learning. Businesses have the opportunity to now pause and re-evaluate their learning and development strategies and goals. Moving to remote or blended learning platforms can benefit any size organization through the cost savings associated with travel and time away from the job.

A recent study by eLearning Industry, revealed that when comparing the costs of traditional classroom-style training (instructor, materials, technology, potential travel AND time away from work) to a virtual learning format can result in huge savings for the company, by some estimates between \$9,550 and \$15,700 per course. This cost savings can have a terrific impact on smaller businesses, in particular.

Investing in the development of your workforce is also a key retention strategy, as employees seek companies that demonstrate their commitment to the team, by training and upskilling the individual contributors.

CONTACT YOUR COLUMBUS CHAMBER

Are you a Chamber member looking for guidance and direction on your workforce strategy? You can schedule a meeting with Workforce Development Director Kelly Fuller to discuss the best ways to attract and retain talent in today's workforce, as well as ways to build a strong company culture.

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Delivery

How are companies training today? Virtual learning can be delivered strictly online, or in some cases, in a blended format that better suits the employee and the business. One of the challenges to moving to a strictly virtual platform is keeping the learner engaged with the content and motivated to achieve mastery.

Learning and development professionals can optimize the engagement with learners by explaining topics using images, illustrations, and real world examples. Tying the virtual world to the workplace is critical and can be achieved through using scenarios that occur on the job. Maintain sustained audience participation and interest in your virtual sessions with co-trainers.

Having multiple voices with subject matter expertise enriches the educational experience. Industry experts can visit your classroom and chat with students from the comfort of their own office or even home. Collaborations like these engender active participation at all levels. It also removes geographic barriers, allowing trainers to connect from anywhere in the world.

Local IT training provider Per Scholas made the shift to total virtual delivery early in the pandemic. Per Scholas was founded more than 20 years ago with a mission to open doors to transformative technology careers for individuals from often overlooked communities.

The Columbus office boasts 85% of students graduate in fourteen weeks or less. And 80% of those graduates land jobs. Moving from traditional in-person training to total virtual delivery, the organization continues to teach and motivate students, readying them with the skills and certifications to enter the workplace.



“Going forward, Per Scholas will continue to build out its virtual platform. Prior to COVID-19, we were already in the process of exploring a “blended learning” model that included sites in different cities remoting in to an instructor to be taught simultaneously. Our exploration of this learning platform allowed us to make the “pivot” to remote more easily than others.

Our plan is to use the remote model to allow us to serve more students, as well as not be bound geographically when it comes to utilizing our admissions teams, instructors and coaches to support students across markets.”

- Toni Cunningham, Managing Director, Per Scholas Columbus

To continue this conversation on training and hear from Toni, check out a recent Huddle on Training in a Virtual Space [here](#).

The onslaught of the pandemic caused Goodwill Columbus to quickly re-evaluate their training and service delivery models. They moved to identify ways to continue offering training and employment assistance in unprecedented times.

Moving to virtual learning and the utilization of social media has allowed Goodwill Columbus to continue their mission of helping those in need to acquire training and employment skills, leading to job opportunities in IT, healthcare, hospitality and retail.



“Student feedback regarding virtual learning has been great, as they can continue to manage their households during these unconventional times, and still take part in ongoing education and employment opportunities to do better for themselves and their families.

Goodwill Columbus takes great pride in helping participants find their first job or next best job.”

- Patrick Maks, Careers in Technology Program Manager, Goodwill Columbus

Educating learners in the skilled trades presents some challenges. It can be difficult to replicate drawing blood or changing a tire in a virtual world. Education providers are using blended formats of delivery, combining traditional classroom (with social distance and other protocols in place) with online lessons. This has proven to be a great strategy for some Ohio Technical Centers.

Eastland Fairfield Career and Technical School Adult Education has continued to deliver training for in-demand careers. Courses in welding, HVAC, cyber security, medical and dental assisting for high school graduates over the age of 18 are available at their Groveport campus. Businesses can participate by joining advisory boards and guide curriculum based on your industry's specific workforce needs. Adult training programs are great locations for businesses to source a skilled talent pipeline. To learn more about connecting to adult graduates visit their website [HERE](#).

“Hands-on technical training in the skilled trades continues to be offered in an in-person environment following all COVID precautions. Blended solutions for theory learning are prevalent.”

- Kelly Wallace, Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio

Meeting the Local Needs of Business

The Columbus Chamber values key higher education partners like Columbus State Community College (CSCC), Franklin University, and Ohio Dominican University (ODU). Businesses can partner with the colleges directly to hire students from a variety of existing programs, or benefit from customized training designed to meet their specific needs. In our current environment, many are available in virtual or bended platforms.

Responding to local needs, CSCC and ODU have created training specific to the Columbus region, addressing the area's top in-demand fields like Supply Chain and Logistics. The coursework can be competed in as little as 8 weeks and is delivered entirely online. More information can be found through the following links:

[Columbus State Community College](#) | [Ohio Dominican University](#)

One such example of a Chamber member customizing their training needs in the financial services sector is a local partnership between Heartland Bank and CSCC, with the creation of Certificate of Banking Fundamentals. Students develop in-demand skills and get ready for a job with on-site internships. In the two-semester certificate program, students take targeted classes such as Principles of Business, Customer Service and Sales, Personal Finance, Negotiation, Principles of Banking, Business Ethics and more. Program graduates can later apply the certificate toward an associate degree at CSCC or a bachelor's degree at a four-year college.

Chamber member and state of Ohio approved education provider Franklin University can train your team for a Data Analytics Certificate. The course is totally online through FranklinWORKS, a customized business resource for the Region. This is an initiative of the Governor's Office of Workforce Transformation to develop Ohio's workforce. More information is available [here](#).

The State of Ohio has provided many options for businesses to continue to invest in their employees. A large number of the trainings and certifications are available entirely online. The recently announced Individual Micro Credential Assistance Program (IMAP) was created to provide opportunities for Ohioans who are low income, partially unemployed, or totally unemployed, to participate in a training program and receive a micro credential. Training providers that submit successful applications will be reimbursed up to \$3,000 upon completion of each micro credential for in demand careers in high growth industry sectors like Business, IT, Manufacturing, Construction, Healthcare, Transportation and Robotics.



The Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio, a key partner of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, also provides funding streams for businesses through Incumbent Worker Training dollars. These grants can be used for a variety of training opportunities to upskill your employees and enhancing their productivity. For more information, connect with Associate Director of Business Solutions Windy Murphy: wmurphy@wdbco.org.

The WDBCO also offers Accelerate Career Success, a national grant through the Midwest Urban Strategies that helps connect jobseekers to in-demand careers in Healthcare and Information Technology, focusing on adult and dislocated workers that lead to credential attainment and employment. OhioMeansJobs Columbus-Franklin County is assisting job seekers with learning more about program qualifications and assisting with job placement after your training is complete. Info on connecting to job seekers here: info@omjcfc.org

Make the Jump

Convenience, flexibility, and cost effectiveness are key benefits to virtual and blended training and education. Online courses designed to present content and test competencies more quickly and with reduced expenses will erode the more traditional in-person training. Businesses can benefit from the efficiencies of virtual and blended learning.

For more information on how you can develop your team, fill open positions, and find training and financial resources, contact Director of Workforce, Kelly Fuller at Kellyfuller@columbus.org.



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