



Enabling employees through sustained learning

Workforce training strategies that mix formal and informal learning drive productivity, efficiency.

Effective employee training for new enterprise software systems is critical to business success. Enterprises that recognize the strategic advantage of comprehensive training and enablement empower their employees with the sustained knowledge and understanding required to meet business goals. When employees have access to the right learning tools at the right time and in the desired format, they become more productive, are more motivated and experience greater job satisfaction. This leads to a highly effective workforce that not only understands business goals but is also capable of achieving them.

Getting to this high level of learning requires a blend of formal and informal training and education in order to instill and sustain knowledge. Although formal, up-front training for new software systems remains important to establish employees' base of knowledge, enterprises are learning that it's equally important to sustain that knowledge with current, less formal training over time. By combining formal and informal approaches, enterprises can ensure that their workforces have the tools they need in order to get the most out of enterprise software investments as well as to perform their jobs as efficiently as possible.

"When it comes to workforce enablement, the most important thing for an organization is the fast end user adoption of a certain change," says Sebastian Grodzietzki, head of Solution Management at SAP. "They need best practices to follow, and they need to understand not only the right way of doing things but also the fastest way to get answers when they're unsure, without bothering colleagues or creating too many help desk tickets."

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The well-trained workforce

Comprehensive enterprise-wide learning programs help organizations reduce time to productivity and value from their IT investments. Specifically, the benefits of well-planned learning programs include:

- **INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY**—Employees are empowered with the information they need in order to interact effectively with enterprise software programs. Answers are presented to employees at the moment of uncertainty, significantly reducing the time spent searching for answers, interrupting colleagues with questions or creating help desk tickets.

Build a better education experience

SAP Workforce Performance Builder (WPB) derives greater value from IT investments by helping organizations develop their informal and formal training programs quickly and easily. By leveraging prebuilt content from SAP Knowledge Acceleration, enterprises can reduce the ramp-up time and time to productivity of the workforce, because they don't need to start content development from scratch—prebuilt content can be tailored with WPB for specific enterprise needs. The tool offers a cost-effective way to develop, update and deploy enablement materials to ensure that the workforce and the organization get the most out of their enterprise applications from the start.

WPB comprises four components:



PRODUCER—This component records, edits and deploys context-sensitive content, simulations, help documents and rapid e-learning courses.



INSTANT PRODUCER—This easy-to-use, wizard-driven transaction recording utility designed for subject matter expert usage doesn't require additional tool training.



MANAGER—This component provides server-based content development workflows and collaboration features, project management, basic learning management and reporting.



NAVIGATOR—This component delivers help directly in the application window whenever the user accesses a certain application screen or input field.

By offering components that can be customized as needed, WPB helps enterprises save time and effort in creating training programs and maximizes the impact of the education materials to enable shorter time to value.

- **MORE-EFFECTIVE HELP DESKS**—With comprehensive help content presented in context, help desks spend less time answering usage questions from employees and can focus their efforts on more-strategic or pressing tasks.
- **GREATER EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION**—When employees can get answers to their usage questions on their own in the format of their choice, they become more proficient in using enterprise applications and are less frustrated, so software adoption rates go up.
- **SMOOTHER BUSINESS PROCESSES**—When employees have the knowledge they need in order to use enterprise systems effectively, the processes supported by the software run more smoothly and with less risk of human error.
- **MORE-EFFECTIVE OUTWARD-FACING COMMUNICATION AND TRANSACTIONS**—Employee interaction with customers, partners and suppliers is improved, because workers are well versed in using the systems that run the business.
- **SEAMLESS CHANGES AND UPDATES**—Training and education channels distribute information about changes—software updates, new regulations that affect the business or improved processes, for example—at the moment it's needed, so workforces are always up to date with the most-current information.

Beyond the classroom

Today formal education approaches such as classroom training remain an important component of enterprise-wide initiatives. However, as more-informal strategies gain popularity, organizations are finding that they can reduce their dependence on formal methods—which are often more rigid and limited, yet expensive—by offering a variety of flexible new ways to learn. These approaches include:

- **COLLABORATIVE AND SOCIAL LEARNING**—This enriches the learning process by enabling employees to come together. Workers form communities of practice groups to clarify topics, exchange information and offer each other help.
- **MOBILE/WEB CONTENT DELIVERY**—Enabling employees to learn when and where they like, in the format they prefer, turns learning into an ongoing process that can happen anywhere, not just in the office or the training room.

- CONTEXT-SENSITIVE AND JUST-IN-TIME HELP**—Helping employees move forward with a process or an application by providing answers in the context of what they are trying to do with the application at that moment helps them overcome hurdles without overwhelming them with too much information. It also gives them the answers they need in order to avoid disturbing colleagues for support or issuing help desk tickets.

A comprehensive approach



SAP Workforce Performance Builder is one piece of the SAP suite of learning management software designed to derive greater value from IT investments by helping enterprises create, disseminate, assess and manage training content to empower employees. Tools from

SAP Education can support every step of the training process with specific solutions for each phase of the learning journey:

- DIAGNOSE**—Optimize the performance of enterprise applications and the people who use them with SAP User Experience Management by Knoa. Assess how an application performs for each user—separating real issues from opinions—and take corrective action to ensure delivery of all the value expected from the software.
- BUILD**—SAP Knowledge Acceleration offers flexible deployment scenarios and a variety of course offerings, so organizations can hit the ground running with prebuilt training content. SAP Workforce Performance Builder adds customization, so solutions can be tailored to fit.
- DELIVER**—SAP Enterprise Learning aligns effective knowledge transfer and efficient learning techniques with corporate strategy for a sharper competitive edge. Use it to institute virtual classrooms, Web-based training and offline training.
- TRACK**—Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of workforce training by tracking results and aligning them with employee performance and goals. The SAP Enterprise Learning suite uses rich analytics to drive consistent and accurate information across your organization, informing new ways to make training decisions.
- BENEFIT FROM PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**—To help enterprises take their training efforts to the next level, the SAP Education organization offers professional consulting services that guide customers through the selection and implementation of these solutions.

- MICROLEARNING**—Sharing new ideas, changes or updates in small bits while avoiding long, drawn-out education sessions in which nuggets of information can get lost conveys a small piece of knowledge to users right at the moment of need and is embedded in the live system to create an augmented learning and working environment for improved real-time employee support.

- ROLE-BASED LEARNING**—This approach tailors learning to the desired format, sequence and context for each individual so that employees can learn in a way that's most comfortable for them.

- ADDING NEW FEATURES TO LEARNING SYSTEMS**—Videos, Webcasts, podcasts and the like can accommodate different styles of learning and enable employees to experiment with different approaches to find the most-effective ones for themselves.

Together, these new approaches to learning create a 360-degree training experience for employees, who feel both empowered and supported by these tools and by their organization.

"Supporting or replacing more-traditional ways of informal learning—such as asking, searching and trial and error—with effective, informal learning that's driven by the right technology is key to a faster-performing workforce and reduced operating expenses," says Grodzietzki. "Help materials such as step-by-step guides, references and tips and tricks that are embedded in the process, in context, help employees comprehend new topics faster and more easily and significantly reduce mistakes."

Learning at the speed of business

When more-formal approaches would prove too expensive or cumbersome, enterprises can benefit most from informal training methods. Take the example of a European utility that deployed SAP software to support various enterprise processes. The industry around the utility is constantly changing—regulations are updated, customer service expectations increase, new competition enters the market—and the way the utility operates changes often too, but usually too quickly for the enterprise software that runs the business to be updated. Realizing that in-person training wasn't feasible to keep up with this rate of change, the utility looked for alternative methods of training to ensure efficient and sustainable learning.

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Using SAP Workforce Performance Builder (WPB), learning content authors at the utility are able to quickly generate professional-looking training materials and handouts as well as technical documentation and e-learning sequences. Authors need generate only one recording, which can be reused to create and customize all their learning content. And, most importantly, this tool enables authors to easily update lessons and training materials to ensure that the latest information is at the users’ fingertips at all times.

Employees of the utility benefit from being able to learn at their own pace, in their own way. WPB offers users hands-on learning with demo, practice and test modes that include video-like sequences to illustrate how to carry out specific transactions in applications. This approach enables users to build comfort and confidence with the software and changes as they are introduced. And live-system assistance is offered through an on-demand context-sensitive wizard.

Steps to successful workforce training strategies

The effectiveness of training programs to accompany new software initiatives can often make or break the success rate of technology projects, according to a 2012 IDC MarketScape [report](#) on worldwide IT education and training.

“Training and team skill have the most significant impact on overall performance of technology and success of technology projects,” writes Cushing Anderson, an IDC program vice president, in the report. “Consequently, well-trained teams derive

more benefit from their technology investments than undertrained teams. When teams are sufficiently trained, their functional performance can be dramatically improved.”

But effective training won’t happen all by itself. Here are some issues to consider when crafting workforce development strategies:

- **GET LEADERSHIP BUY-IN AND SUPPORT**— This is important not just for up-front, formal training but also for ongoing knowledge transfer to sustain learning and accommodate system changes and updates. An organization’s leadership should view the entire lifecycle of training and education as essential to the project’s success.
- **PLAN FOR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**—Include training and education strategies at the same time that new or updated application deployment is planned, not as an afterthought.
- **BRING LEARNING TO THE WORKFORCE**— Traditional training methods require employees to come to training; augment these approaches with informal strategies that deliver information to employees where and when they need it, via mobile devices or home PCs.
- **THINK GLOBALLY**—Ensure that learning programs are available to the entire enterprise—regardless of geographic location—to maximize benefits, and consider localization requirements when appropriate.
- **MAKE IT TIMELY**—Design training content that automatically updates the workforce when software is updated, new regulations are established or business processes change.

Conclusion

For organizations to maximize the value of their enterprise applications, it’s clear that comprehensive, ongoing training must become a top priority. When employees are well trained in the intended use of applications, business processes flow more smoothly, productivity rises and the occurrence of errors is significantly reduced. As IDC has found, investing in the right training and education tools, as well as following best practices, helps ensure that IT projects produce the desired results and enable employees to focus their efforts on the business rather than the tools that support it. ■