
Simply “Converting” systems training for remote work is not enough! Here’s what to do instead

The sudden switch to remote work forced learning professionals to move their systems training programs into virtual mode. This transition created a mixed bag of results depending on **what the training content looked like before going remote**:

- How useful was the training before the shift?
- How engaging and versatile was the training material?
- Could it be easily adapted to remote learning?

Given the short time frame, many companies’ first instinct was to copy and paste their current training content and deploy it virtually.

Traditional classrooms were *converted* into virtual classrooms. This approach was quick and seemingly efficient. However, many learning professionals still had this unshakeable feeling that this would only be a temporary stopgap.

They were right.

Virtual-instructor-led training is a different universe than traditional instructor-led classrooms. It brings along with it a host of new challenges while exacerbating old ones.

Challenges that come with remote training

Longer set-up time

Trainees have to get on a conference line. Some might be late. Once everybody’s ready and on the same page about the sessions’ learning objective – 15 minutes could have already passed.

Dependent on a quick and stable internet connection

It’s almost expected to experience internet connection issues during a video call. People get disconnected, the audio gets choppy, and people have to repeat themselves. That’s especially true for large organizations distributed across regions and countries. Someone based in a smaller town won’t have the same connection as someone living in a metropolis.

Harder to gauge active participation

Remote employee training through video conferencing removes instant feedback for both the trainer and the trainee. In a typical training environment, it is much easier to identify which participants are distracted or not fully engaged. Not only are there more distractions, but the trainer is unable to properly assess and correct these distractions.

More challenging to assess retention

With thousands of users working from home, it’s harder to make sure that users are retaining

the right information and applying it correctly every day.

What do these challenges point to in terms of the ideal remote training format?

- Keeping trainees engaged in-person wasn't exactly straightforward. Remote training has the additional challenge of lacking immediate feedback. Lessons have to be *intrinsically* immersive and interactive to maximize engagement and retention. Passive formats, including Powerpoint slides, and PDFs, are out of contention.
- [Remote training](#) creates friction. Ideally, you would keep video conferencing to a minimum. A blended learning approach combining virtual sessions with self-paced training and microlearning is the best way to rectify this problem.

In short, not all training formats are suited for remote working. If systems training weren't immersive, interactive, or practical from the get-go, converting it for virtual distribution won't be enough - you'll have to *transform* it.



The image shows the cover of the 'assima L&D HANDBOOK'. The cover features a woman in a striped shirt looking thoughtful, with her hand on her chin. The title 'How to implement a high-impact remote learning journey' is written in white on an orange background at the bottom. The Assima logo and 'L&D HANDBOOK' are at the top.

assima  L&D HANDBOOK

Implement High-Impact Remote Learning Journeys

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Training conversion vs. transformation: What's the difference?

Renowned instructional design expert, Dr. Jim Guilkey, has expounded on the idea of [conversions vs. transformation of virtual learning](#).

What converting training looks like:

- Duplicate what you were doing in the classroom.
- If you were using Powerpoint slides, PDFs, or static screenshots, put it online.
- It's ineffective because it fails to consider the inherent differences between instructor-led classroom and virtual classroom.

VS

What transforming content looks like:

- Training is redesigned based on the reality that virtual training is a new medium with a unique context, i.e., trainers do not have the instant feedback that face-to-face interactions provide.
- Lessons are naturally interactive and immersive.
- Uses a blended approach to deliver highly effective virtual learning.

When looking for advice on making remote training more effective – most of it starts from the premise that you should improve the interactions or the delivery. You'll hear tips and tricks for virtual facilitation that might come in useful, but fail to realize that **redesigning training content to be naturally conducive to virtual distribution is the most significant lever to improve learning outcomes.**

How to transform remote systems training for maximum learning effectiveness

1- Use interactive simulations to bridge the gap between learners and tools

When it comes to training users on applications remotely – simulations are your best option. They allow users to practice, experiment, and make mistakes without any consequences. Even while working remotely, training is hands-on and perfectly mirrors real-life scenarios. Your processes become second nature in no time.

What does it look like in practice?

- Use an initial virtual-led training session to give learners a quick rundown of the application. Users can then switch to self-paced training and practice from anywhere, anytime.
- Adopt a “show me, now you try it” method. Show users how to perform a series of tasks, then have them try it.
- Run scenarios and have them fill the blanks. Make them think instead of spoon-feeding them all the information.

2 - Go from piecemeal to holistic with performance support tools

Learning should be viewed as a holistic journey, not a series of one-off sessions. Here's why:

- People forget, and there are always learning gaps. Even with the most immersive and interactive training, 100% assimilation of knowledge is impossible.
- Formal training might cover 80% of scenarios, with the last 20% learned on-the-job. The learning journey has to take account of that last 20%.
- Some tasks are completed so rarely that it's unreasonable to expect users to remember

how.

- Training content should keep up with changes in the application. Minor updates don't warrant a new round of training. It's more efficient to relay them to users at the point of need.
- Application training isn't about where and what to click. It's inherently tied to business processes that are subject to ever-changing compliance and regulations. These significant changes have to be notified to the right users immediately, without disrupting their work.

As a corollary, learning has to be reinforced over time to maximize retention. In other words, training isn't finished the moment users are in the live application. Training has to be continuously repeated in various contexts and spaced out over time.

What does it look like in practice?

Training is embedded into the users' workflow with performance support tools. They allow employees to receive answers on-the-job, at the moment of need. It's especially important for remote work. Employees used to be able to walk to a colleague and ask questions. Without face-to-face communication, they have to become self-sufficient.

That said, a holistic learning journey includes both formal training and performance support.

- Formal training: gives users a solid baseline familiarity with the applications.
- Performance support: Gives users the ability to apply what they learned in practice while working offsite - without any slump in productivity.

The addition of performance support tools creates a bridge between knowledge acquisition and knowledge application. Results? Faster onboarding time, boost in employee performance, and less time wasted on re-learning.

To learn more about creating high-impact remote learning journeys, download our [FREE 15-page L&D Handbook](#).