

# I M P A C T

Your Performance Improvement Resource from BEI

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## Performance Perspectives

### Managing the Change to Online Learning

So your organization wants to jump on the bandwagon and begin online training. Many companies have come to understand that classroom training is not the answer to all their training needs and therefore are moving to blended learning solutions. One critical component to blended learning is online training. Online training is quickly becoming the hottest new trend to hit the corporate market. Most of America's leading companies already have some form of online learning. Experts advocate that online learning reduces the need for travel, has shorter development cycles, provides cost savings, and allows for quick dissemination of common messages that are critical to success in today's competitive market.

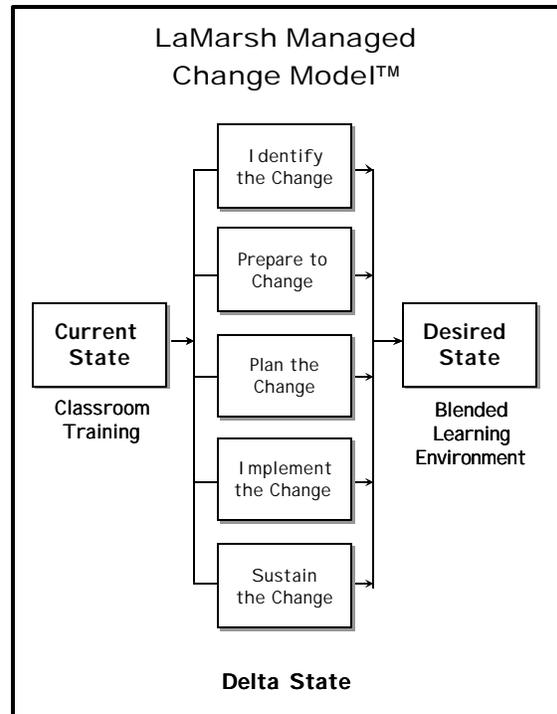
So where do you need to start and what do you need to think about to implement your online training program?

#### Identifying the Change

Even though most organizations are moving to blended learning solutions, for the purposes of this conversation we will **identify the change** as moving from classroom training (current state) to online training (future state).

Developing your online learning program is full of challenges. There is a strategic phase that examines how to create an online learning environment that:

- Aligns to your business objectives
- Integrates into your business processes
- Is supported by a learning management system that works for the organization and the learner
- Is driven by compelling and engaging content



Your organization will likely want to engage the help of consultants to help you develop your e-learning strategy. A good e-learning strategy addresses issues of learning effectiveness and technology. Decisions will have to be made about what you will do in-house and what you will outsource. Do you have instructional designers who can design web-based courses? Does your IT department have the capabilities to develop, host, and maintain your courses? Do you need to select vendors to do some or part of this work? These are just a few of the questions that you will need to answer. An e-learning consultant can help you develop your e-learning strategy that will guide you through this maze.

Even the best-designed e-learning program will go unused or unappreciated if adequate attention is not given to the fact that this is a major change initiative. Using the systematic application of change management principles in the implementation of your e-learning program will ensure success as your organization transitions from classroom training to online training. Change management is a methodology that allows an organization to plan a change and pay attention to elements in the plan (i.e. communication, learning, and reward systems, sponsorship, etc.).

Critical to the change process is that the organization clearly defines the *current* state of training and the *desired* state of training. This establishes *why* the organization needs to change as well as *what* is changing. In the current state instructors may report course completion to a local HR person. In the future, however, employee registration and tracking are done online automatically by a learning management system. Knowing why and what will change helps you prepare and plan the change.

### **Prepare to Change to an Online Learning Environment**

Identify roles and responsibilities for the change. This includes assigning the role of sponsor(s) (senior management) and change agent(s) (functional management, supervisors, etc.), as well as identifying the targets of the change (the learners). It will be necessary to coach your sponsors and change agents through their role as targets (they have issues and concerns with this new technology just like the next person) so that they can be more effective as leaders of the change.

Determine the existing culture for learning. What is the history within your organization with online learning? What do you already know that will cause resistance to implementing online learning in your organization? What steps can you take to reduce and manage any negative impact from the change?

### **Plan the Change from Classroom to Online**

Develop communication strategies to tell employees about the plan to change to an online learning environment. Nobody likes surprises. The current state is comfortable, and your employees like classroom training. You will need to communicate to employees why the organization must leave the current state and also define the future (desired state). In addition, you will need to communicate how the organization will get through the delta state (the transition phase—that anxious place between the old way and the new way).

People make choices about whether or not to change based on two key variables:

- Do I want to change?
- Do I know how to change and be successful in the future state?



It is critical in the planning stage to develop a learning system. Online learning requires different skills and knowledge than traditional classroom learning. Does everyone know how to navigate through a course, your learning management system, or the web? How will the learner get credit? Are they all familiar with the new terminology, like browsers and bookmarks? How will they learn with this new technology? You can help employees change by providing them with opportunities to gain the new knowledge and skills necessary for success in the future state.

When designing your learning system keep these questions in mind:

- What needs to be learned?
- Who needs to learn?
- How much time and money is needed?

If you developed a good communication system and an effective learning system, then you are on your way to successfully changing your organization's training to an online learning environment. The final segment in planning the change is to develop a reward system. Once you move your employees to the current state you need to be able to keep them there. Don't let them slide back to their old paradigm and comforts of classroom training. You need to recognize that your employees have come through transition and have made the change to the desired state. Recognize and reward your new online learners.

### **Implement the Change**

Now that you have prepared and planned you are ready to implement your new online learning environment. An implementation plan is necessary because online learning puts more responsibility on the employee to be an independent learner and on the manager to know what learning s/he wants for the employee. In the implementation stage the change agents (managers) must develop an implementation plan. The implementation plan is a key part of their job. The plan will layout how this new change in training will be implemented. When and where will training occur? How will employees know about training? What does management expect? The plan helps targets (employees) move from the old idea of going off to training to the new idea that training comes to them at their work station.

### **Sustain the Online Learning Environment**

A critical piece of managing change is evaluation and continuous monitoring in order to sustain the change. Because employees were familiar and comfortable with the current state (classroom training), there may be a tendency to revert back to this old way of doing things. To counter this, make sure that you identify how you will know if the change is occurring or working, and what you will do about it if it is not. What key measurables will need to be watched to monitor the integrity of the new online learning environment? How often will they need to be measured and for how long? What is the action plan if they start to slip?

### **Conclusion**

If your organization is ready to make the move from traditional classroom training to an online learning environment, you can play a key role in making this change happen successfully. Change Management is a systematic method for helping organizations implement and manage the change from classroom training to online learning.

**BEI** provides blended learning solutions as well as consulting on how organizations can manage the change associated with these types of initiatives.



## From Strategy to Action New Format!

Since we all suffer from *so much information and so little time*, we have decided to change the format of this column. The goal of this change is to minimize the time required to review the column while maximizing the value of the information shared. Rather than featuring an entire project, this column will contain “lessons learned” regarding specific topics. The name of this column will change to **Lessons Learned** in the next issue. We hope that you find this new format quick and informative!

**Topic:** Subject Matter Experts (SME)

Here are some lessons that we learned from working with SMEs:

- Define the big picture. SMEs need to understand how their work will fit into the overall project.
- Agree on roles and responsibilities and level of effort at the beginning of the project.
- Clarify project milestones and timelines at the onset, but be prepared for change because of high demands on the SME’s time (even though your deadline remains the same).
- SMEs are high performers in their area of expertise and therefore their time is valuable and in high demand within their organization. Because of this, minimize the time you need by preparing and sharing an interview protocol before your meeting.
- Because SMEs are experts in their field, they often do not explain things clearly because they tend to make assumptions about what the audience already knows or should know. Your job is to bring clarity and understanding to the subject.
- When working with more than one SME, identify a lead SME and a process for handling conflict between SMEs at the onset of the project.

## Marketplace

### **Managed Change™ Workshop**

*Improving the Speed and Success of Change*

Changes in systems, processes, strategies, and people have become a constant in the corporate environment. Those organizations that learn to work with rather than against change will have a distinct competitive advantage. Even welcomed change can be difficult and time consuming without the right tools, methods, and resources. **BEI’s Managed Change™** workshop teaches a project approach for addressing change and the human issues involved in major change. The Managed Change Model™ is a simple yet thorough approach to help organizations:

- Identify the patterns and structures of change in order to control them
- Predict the issues and problems in each stage of change in order to accelerate the change and minimize the pain
- Sustain a high level of performance during turbulent times

Contact **BEI** at 248.652.8100 for more information about how this workshop can help you develop change management as a competency in your organization. Or visit <http://www.beinc-online.com/learningcenter/managedchange.asp>.



## Worthy Web Sites

<https://officedepot.netbusiness.com/BusinessTools/forms/default.asp?SID=0AHDC1PNQ0WQ8PMM0QQG3JS75LPQ3GUC&PP=206>. *Free downloadable forms.* Avail yourself to over 70 business forms courtesy of Office Depot "as is" or to customize.

<http://www.getmoredone.com/trivia.html#anchor7937295>. *Time trivia facts.* Did you know that employees are most productive on Tuesdays? Other topics include Meetings, Lifetime, and Traffic Delays.

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