Digital delivery

Converting face-to-face training
to virtual delivery

The new normal

In a swiftly changing world, we're having to be more agile than ever when it comes to creating learning programmes that deliver, engage, and get results. At Kineo and The Oxford Group, we've used the challenges of an increasingly online world to get ourselves thinking differently about face-to-face learning delivery – it's time to re-visit what we understand by 'blended learning'.

"Necessity is the mother of invention"

As the world of work battles to make sense of the new operating norms we all face, the world of workplace learning is equally having to quickly re-think how it operates.

For years, the mainstay of learning and development practice has been face-to-face delivery. Many in our profession would argue there is little substitute for a skilled trainer working in person with a group of learners, together exploring, experimenting and practicing new knowledge, skills and behaviours. But faced with the unprecedented change in how we can interact, the traditional delivery channel of many training delivery programmes has disappeared overnight.
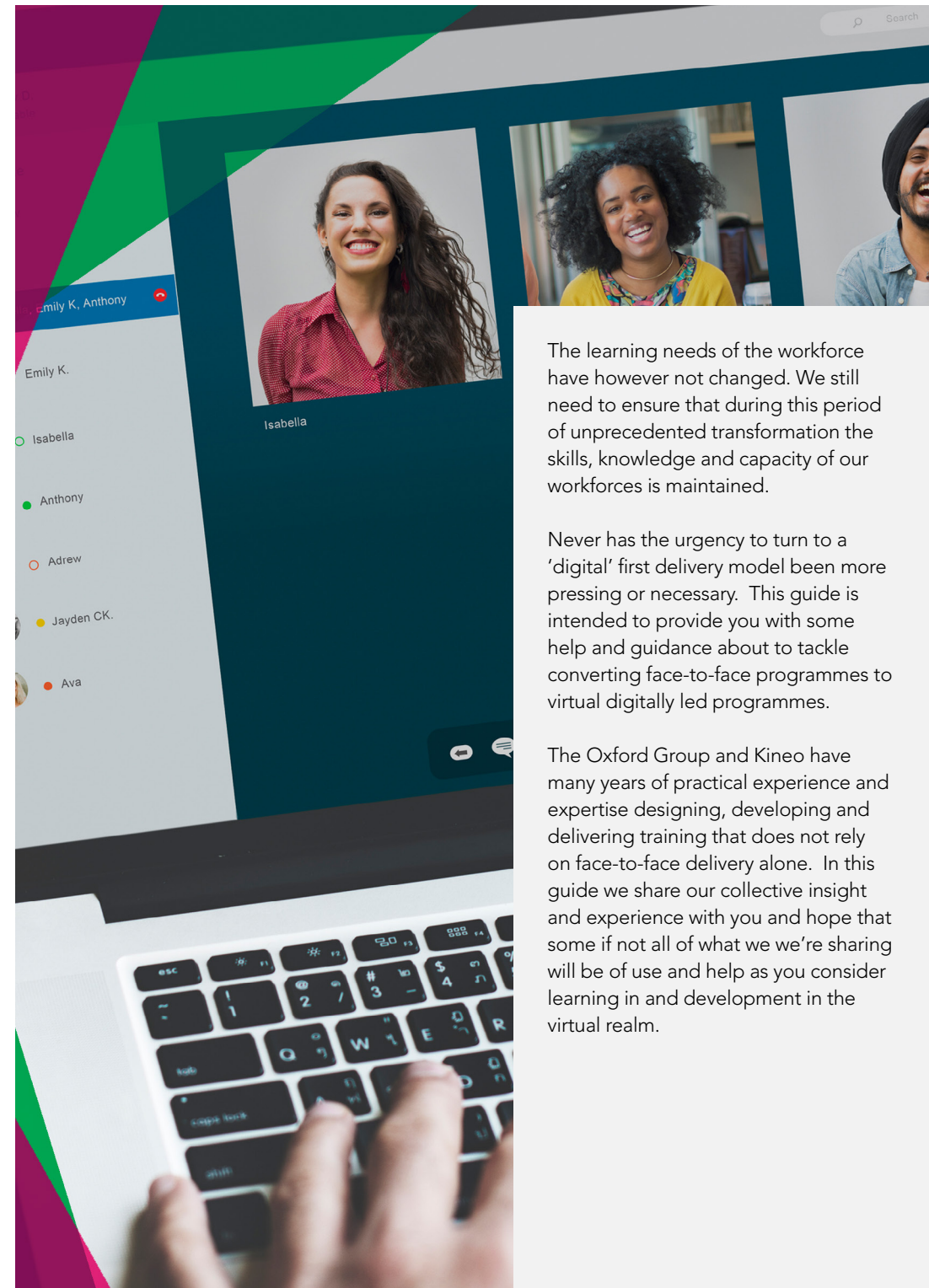
The learning needs of the workforce have however not changed. We still need to ensure that during this period of unprecedented transformation the skills, knowledge and capacity of our workforces is maintained.

Never has the urgency to turn to a 'digital' first delivery model been more pressing or necessary. This guide is intended to provide you with some help and guidance about to tackle converting face-to-face programmes to virtual digitally led programmes.

The Oxford Group and Kineo have many years of practical experience and expertise designing, developing and delivering training that does not rely on face-to-face delivery alone. In this guide we share our collective insight and experience with you and hope that some if not all of what we we're sharing will be of use and help as you consider learning in and development in the virtual realm.

Where do you start?

You have multiple courses and programmes that are currently delivered face-to-face, all of which have had to be cancelled. How do you convert all that content into a digital format quickly and efficiently, yet still deliver the outcomes necessary to ensure the organisations, goals, priorities and needs are fully met?

Of course, you can choose just to upload your session plans, slides decks, trainer notes, learner workbooks and handouts to your LMS or other online portal; indeed they may already be there. Whilst this option may be easy to do, and at least helps get information out there, it is unlikely just presenting material in this way will deliver the results you want.

Unfortunately, there is no simple response to this challenge. To create a virtual programme, much like creating your Face-to-face programme, will require effort, skill and resource. Therefore, before you rush in we recommend you take a step back, look at your face-to-face programme and undertake a process of basic triage.

For example, start by identifying which programmes are:

- Tactically critical – impact of the safe and legal operation of your organisation

- Urgent & Important – will influence short to medium term organisational performance

- Important – provide longer term, maybe more strategic organisational impact

- Necessary – programmes that are necessary but can be paused without immediate impact

These categories are not intended to provide a definitive framework, but to provide an example of the sort of structure you may wish to apply to your triage system.

To help determine which programmes fit in which category you may wish to think about applying some form of impact analysis tool.

For example:

Organisational Performance Criticality

High

High ——————————————————— Low

Tactical Criticality

Low
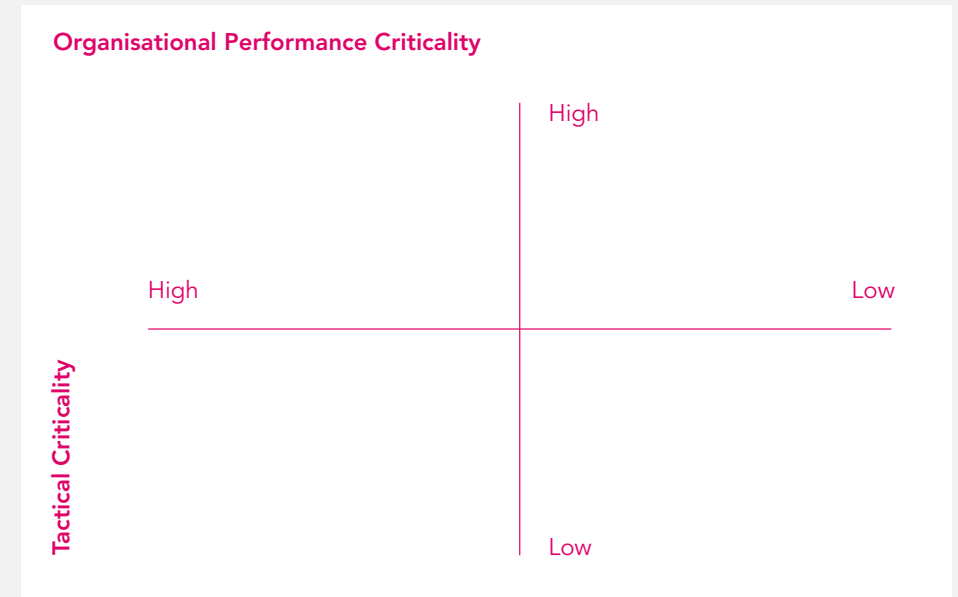
You might need to identify factors that are more reflective and granular. But applying a logical process for prioritising a large programme will help you identify the most important programmes to focus your attention and resources.

Once you have carried out your triage and have a clearer picture of which programmes need converting first, then you face the second challenge.

What digital options do I have?

You may or may not already have and use digital learning as a part of your current delivery strategy. If you do, your options of course may be more varied, if not, you will probably want to keep it simple.

Before getting into the detail of programme design there are a few practical, technical related questions that you will need to ask yourself. Your answers may well define what delivery options are open to you.

- Do you use digital content at the moment?

- What sort of digital learning do you currently support?

- Do you currently use an LMS?

- Will that be where you host your content?

- What group communication tool do you use as an organisation?

Before committing to one approach over another, it's definitely worth taking a moment to understand the technical landscape you're operating in. Having a good understanding of digital capability and capacity is one element in defining your choices, but it's not the only dimension.

Research has over the years clearly demonstrated that if digital learning strategies are to work, then much like when developing face-to-face learning, the approach, methods and pedagogy must match the learning culture of your organisation and your people.

Much in the same way as you may use Honey & Mumford's Learning Styles to determine a best approach to designing a workshop, thinking about how, where and when your workforce uses and engages with digital data may provide valuable insight. This insight may help lead you towards a digital delivery choice that fits not only your technical capacity and capabilities but reflects best how your workforce will engage with what for many could be a new way to learn.

How to present your content?

The third and probably biggest challenge for everyone tackling converting face-to-face to virtual is about presentation.

The obvious and 'go-to' would at first glance seem to be **virtual classroom** technology. Yes, this is a great way to recreate some of the dynamic learner experiences you can achieve when working alongside each other. It can provide a more energetic learning environment than other more passive digital learning approaches. The technology itself is readily accessible and you don't need expensive or complicated 'hosting systems' to utilise it.

So, it sounds perfect doesn't it? Surely all I have to do is 'lift and shift' my face-to-face content and programme into the virtual tool and off I go?

This is of course an option, and indeed there may be some critical programmes you've identified that lend themselves to more didactic delivery, where group interaction whilst valuable is not critical to getting the knowledge out. If this is the case, you may

as a short-term measure choose to take the content and turn it into a series of webinars; online presentations which have more limited opportunity for interaction but are quicker and easier to develop, produce and deliver.

If you have programmes that would fit in this delivery style then our <u>Ultimate Guide to Designing and Delivering Webinars</u> would be a great starting point.

If however you are seeking to replicate more of the person-to-person dynamic in your strategy, then thinking about how to adopt a more blended approach would be a better starting point.

The changes we are all experiencing have given blended learning a new life. It used to mean just elearning plus classroom, in one order or the other. We have for the time being lost our ability to use the traditional 'classroom' so we now have to think about how 'virtual classrooms' can fill the gap face-to-face has created.

To help you get to grips of designing 'virtual classrooms' we have produced a sister-guide to this one.

This provides some of the details you'll need to get to grips with when looking at designing virtual classroom session.

In order to be successful in converting to virtual, utilising the opportunites that Virtual Classroom technology offers requires you to adopt the principle of 'blended learning'. This means the shift of attention needs to be less about the 'course' itself, and much more about the 'content' you want learners to engage with – then working out what is the best method for delivering that content. Moving to digital, virtual delivery requires you to shift your mindset. Good blended design using a full range of virtual approaches requires the learning designer to think less about courses and much more about resources.

In his classic book 'The New Learning Architect', Clive Shepherd offered us a breakdown of the options open to the blended learning designer. Shepherd's model considers the role of the four learning contexts, and the part each context plays in creating an effective blended learning design.

Experiential	On-demand	Non-formal	Formal
Benchmarking Job rotation/ enrichment	**Performance support materials** Online books	**Coaching/OJT** Mini workshops	**Classroom courses** Self study elearning
Project reviews Performance appraisals	**Help desks** Mobile learning	**Rapid elearning** White papers	
Action learning Continuous learning		**Podcasts** Webinars	**Outdoor learning** Collaborative distance learning
		Internal conferences Online video	**Computer games** & simulations Blended learning
Personal reflection Reflecting with others	**Online search** Using forums	**Open learning** Communities of practice	**Professional and postgraduate qualifications** Formal adult education
Blogging Getting a life	**Using wikis**	**Continuing professional development**	

Let's not kid ourselves that everyone will or even can use all of these methods and approaches in their blends. Indeed, it's probably not appropriate to try.

What we're suggesting is that when considering how to convert your face-to-face training into the virtual world there are lots of possible options, but the best blend for your organisation will depend on a number of factors.

How digital 'savvy' are you and your organisation already?	Will it work, how easy or difficult will it be to introduce new technology (or using existing technology in a different way) to your organisation.
Design for both your audience and your technology.	How easily they will or won't adapt to learning virtually and the technology you have available – there is little point designing a programme that either won't engage or can't technically be delivered.
Consider carefully who will be producing and delivering the new digital content.	What support or training are they going to need to be able to get the most from a new digital approach?
Engage with your IT team BEFORE committing to any new tool or technology.	Often blend developers fall at the first hurdle when it comes to integrating your blended solution into your organisation's existing 'tech stack.'
Give yourself enough time to convert existing material into digital.	'Copying and pasting' in the main won't cut it when it comes to developing and providing an engaging alternative to your face-to-face programmes.
KEEP IT SIMPLE.	Only use elements and tools that you can comfortably and easily access and use and won't slow progress or your ability to roll-out your new virtual programme.

CHALLENGE #3

Whilst delivering on speed, scale and reach is one part of the picture, it's also about pitching learning at the right level and driving higher empathy and learner centric approaches. This means getting to grips with the culture, context, and audience at a deep level, pinpointing their challenges and needs and identifying where personalisation may be required.

Gold standard blends mean adopting a more campaign-style approach to promoting and engaging your learners. Look at the available channels, profile and segment the audience and deliver appropriate multi-media content approach that really hits the mark.

A blended programme should not be considered as a one-off event; it's a carefully planned sequence of activities delivered over time. Think of promoting and embedding the blend as a programme, that needs a marketing and service management element beyond just project management.

Traditionally blended learning is the seamless integration of online and offline learning methods. In these novel and unprecedented times, what constitutes a 'blended design' is changing. Where in the past the 'classroom' constituted the synchronous element of the programme architecture, now we must look to the 'virtual classroom' to provide that connectivity and dynamic engagement.

There's no silver bullet, or pre-fabricated set of blended templates that 'just work'. Each situation requires a bespoke design approach.

TO ILLUSTRATE, HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW A BLEND HAS WORKED FOR ONE OF OUR CLIENTS. →

CASE STUDY

Global Professional Services Firm: Interview Skills

Key challenge

Transform a face-to-face interview skills training course into a technology-based blended solution that's scalable, accessible anywhere, anytime, has a low-lead time, and significantly reduces the time and resource commitment required. The solution also needed to push the boundaries of innovation, provide consistent and robust training and, as a must, incorporate interview role-play and feedback.

Blend approach

With an upfront diagnostic, the blend filters content depending on experience level of the audience. The blend itself is made up of elearning, eSimulations and telephone roleplays and coaching. Multiple bite-size elearning topics, including 'watch and learn' video scenarios, myth busters and virtual coaching can be taken before learners tackle online interview simulations that replicate the popular live practice from the classroom training. With realistic video and multiple routes through a challenging branching simulation, learners have the chance to try their skills at interviewing once, or several times, with each experience being unique.

Benefits

In the first four months, data shows the blend is meeting all of its objectives. Average scores rating it at 4.4 out of 5 across various measures, matching the benchmark of the original and highly successful face-to-face solution. In terms of cost-saving, the organisation estimates it will save around 1,500 professional working hours per annum and annualised savings of approx. £75k in fixed costs. The added benefit of one-to-one coaching means that learners received more focused and tailored feedback and tips.

Blend at a glance
- Diagnostic
- eTutorials
- eSimulations
- Telephone roleplay
- Telephone coaching

UK-based retailer

Key challenge

To train staff in a wide range of key skills more quickly and effectively. To record staff levels of proficiency. To reach large staff population who are geographically dispersed and who work a variety of shift patterns. To have the ability in the medium and long term to produce and maintain own training elearning content.

Blend approach

The blend solution comprised of elearning for induction and key skill fundamentals, classroom-based sessions for more in-depth, group based learning, followed up by hands-on practical training and on-the-job buddy training in stores to ensure competence on the ground. All training records are maintained in a Totara LMS for audit purposes.

Benefits

New starters require less hands-on training when they join, and can take the elearning before they join to give them a head start. It also easily fits in around their shift patterns, and since it delivers greater standardisation of training, staff can move more easily between stores. The blend reduced trainer costs (time, travel) and training venue costs associated with classroom training.

Blend at a glance

- elearning
- Classroom
- On the job training
- Buddy support
- Totara training records

Using this as a template

Is it simply a matter of re-using this or other templates? No. This, like any piece of learning programme development, was built to reflect the context, needs and outcomes that are right for the situation.

Effective design was achieved by understanding the performance need, the culture and environment, the budget and technology considerations, and identifying and targeting the right channels to the target audience.

Whilst the process taken to develop the right blend is the same and all designs will share some core design principles, the final solution will always look different and reflect the needs of both learners and organisation.

Building your blend

The landscape of blended learning is changing all the time as more informal and mobile elements start to get integrated into the overall blend. Here are a few elements that we are introducing into our latest blends:

Flip the classroom
Use group events to do activities and avoid information giving if you can.

Do your lectures at home and your homework in class
A 'lecture' can mean digital content of any type being hosted on a portal or LMS, completion of a piece of digital learning, e.g. MOOC or other online content; in essence curated, digital content resources of any kind.

Convert cohorts of classroom participants into action learning set members
Use action learning and its problem-solving approach to facilitate learners explore live issues

Integrate collaborative learning in between the formal sessions
Look to methods and approaches to establish wider learning communities that can together share ideas, solve problems and provide support

Recognise individual achievement with digital credentials
Tap into the use of 'Open Badges' to provide lifelong transferable records of individual learning

Use HTML 5 to target multi-devices, from tablets to smartphones
Provide just-in time performance support, nudges and follow-up tips for learning in the flow of work

Bring experts into support the delivery of your virtual classrooms
Use the opportunity that remote, virtual delivery offers to utilise 'experts'

Provide one-to-one coaching via web-based discussion
Using everyday communication tools to create person-to-person contact with learners in real time

Consider alternative assessment and evaluation techniques
Explore alternative ways to measure and evaluate learning over the life of the entire programme

Go deeper with upfront research, needs analysis and user profiling
Tap into available and appropriate communication channels, the social media and sharing culture, and audience needs and motivations.

Consider how professional qualifications or accreditations can support engagement
Is there a formal outcome that will be a valuable to the learner and the organisation?

DIGITAL DELIVERY

Top Tips for Developing your Blended Solution

How do you get your blended build right for you organisation, culture, and needs? Start with these top tips.

TIP
1

All good blends have a spine

Blended learning is becoming a rather nebulous term nowadays. Is blended learning simply a collective term for everything a learner can find and do around a particular topic, chosen from a smorgasbord of learning objects? The welcome shift to learning strategies based more on 'resources' and less on 'courses' could lead you to believe that you just have to send out an instruction to your learners to go out there and find whatever you want.

This may be a good approach for some learners, notably confident, experienced or senior employees. But blended learning has to be more than just 'resources'. For many learners there needs to be some spine and flow to the learning process even if they do not want to be told what they should be doing every step of the way. The need for that 'spine' is why we talk about a blended learning architecture. A well-designed building allows free movement around the rooms but it makes it easy for people to navigate and not get lost.

The same is needed for designing a blend. It should feel to the learner that they have some decision-making powers in the process but, where it is important, that they have a clear path through, what could be many learning options. We all know that learners are very different and so when designing blends we should bear this in mind. The challenge is how far you can go to accommodate all those different contexts, personalities and learning styles. One example of trying to be as flexible as possible was a blended design for a client that allowed learners to either go through self-study modules before, or after, a virtual classroom session.

This was great for the theorists and the activists. It was however a real challenge to get the blended design right, as the core virtual classroom could be attended by people who had completed a certain amount of theory (through the elearning) and others who planned to do this afterwards.

Truly learner-centric blends put pressure on everyone to create flexible interventions. There's no point creating a comprehensive online learning experience prior to virtual classroom in which the trainer feels that they have to cover the same ground again.

Getting the right balance between all of the types of learning approaches that Clive Shepherd categorises (Experiential, On-demand, Nonformal and Formal) is a challenge. This is especially the case in the area of encouraging and integrating informal channels into your overall learning solution. So, at the heart of an effective blend, there needs to be an architect. This blended learning designer must be able to assess all of the options available to the organisation and create a learning structure that seamlessly links the different learning options and provides a coherent learner journey.

They may have to think like a marketing professional, as some blends may need a sustained campaign-like approach in order to drive a larger mindset or behavioural change or help implement a change management scheme across an organisation.

It's clear that a perfect blend is one that matches the learners' needs and preferred way of learning and, at the same time, represents the most cost-effective way to implement the learning solution. Often, there is a need to compromise; this is where the blended learning designer's people skills are most needed!

TIP 2

Be systematic in your blended design process

You don't create a blended design in isolation from others. So, you should create a schedule and bring in the right people at the right time. Here's an overview of steps that a blended learning designer or architect should try to follow when defining any kind of blend:

Needs Analysis	Use the opportunity to review, assess and revise the learning objectives and needs of the target audience
Re-assess Key Drivers	Review the key impact drivers for the programme and define how success will be measured
Match content to delivery method/s	Align each learning point/topic with a suitable delivery method, maximise the benefits
Check against target audience	What do different types of learners want/ need?
Assess constraints	What are the most realistic delivery channels and what budget do you have?
Define blend architecture and learner paths	What will the learner experience be, does it work, does it make sense, can it be delivered to budget, to time?
Test, amend, document	Check where your seeking an impact, will programme deliver – adjust and produce final design architecture
Set up work streams	Brief and manage the design and development process for each component of the blend

TIP 3

Work out your assessment strategy right from the start

For many, it can be a great personal motivator to work towards a formal accreditation or qualification in a blended programme and can work well for both vocational and non-job role specific skills, such as leadership or communication.

Official goals and associated stamps of approval can help add rigour to an organisation's learning offering and also shows real investment from them in their staff, as it is the learners that gain the qualification, not the company. (one to consider if staff retention is a goal). So it's a good starting point to consider if the blend can be based around formal accreditation or qualifications.

If this is the case, you'll need to bring third-party accreditors into the mix early on to understand how to design for accreditation or qualification and/or adjust existing training to map to specific qualifications. You might find that your current learning solution is 80% of the way to a recognised qualification.

But even less formal learner paths need some kind of ongoing assessment and feedback so learners know they are 'getting it' and you know they are getting it as well. So, it is crucial that you define right from the start how you are going to know whether your learners have achieved their learning goals.

Formal methods may include invigilated tests, assessed practical exercises, observation at work, writing job-based assignments or interviews by experienced assessors. Less formal knowledge and skills checks can also be done by online tests or classroom tests and observations. Not all blended designers will necessarily have a background in assessment so, if you are going down this path, make sure you have someone experienced in assessment techniques involved right from the start.

But it's also worth considering some much more informal ways you may be able to gauge that learning and performance improvements are taking place. For example, how much might the stakeholders value contributions to a community of practice such as uploads, tip shares, and forum posts? If they are committed to getting a community up and running and genuinely support social learning, then recognising usage and contributions in someone's performance review is key to creating this learning culture and furthering motivation to use it. This is less about 'assessment', and more about valuing other types of activity in someone's development journey. Building a social profile is a good indication of learner engagement.

You also need to consider how feedback will operate in the mix. Especially for blends working towards qualifications or formal assessments. Once you've defined your assessment strategy, turn to feedback and consider who will review

and feedback on formal tasks and assignments, and how? And who will review and provide feedback informally to support learners during their learning journey, and who can feedback and support them in their performance?

Explore the role the learner's line manager, coach and, indeed, peers may play in their performance. After all, these are the people on the ground who are most likely to report on performance on the job. Consider 360-degree type review tools, where others' evidence based feedback plays a part in helping the learner and their manager recognise their strengths, gaps and improvements. And, of course, don't forget that learners' own reflections really count, especially if you're striving for higher empathy, learner centric experiences.

Diagnostics, reflective surveys, learning journals are some of the methods that you could consider, but again, it needs to be recognised by managers and coaches to count. Feedback loops and support can be underplayed in blends, so make sure you give it its due attention.

TIP 4

Use personas

The key to success in blended design is to know your audience. This is more than knowing what job roles and experience they have, as the best blends should have multiple options and paths. So, in determining the right blend, you have to acknowledge the expected pre-existing range of knowledge and experience and the range of different personalities and learning styles plus attitudes to the learning in the first place.

Learning = Marketing

In doing this, set learning design aside for a moment and think like a marketing professional. Why? Because blended design is really about engagement and persuasion. We're trying to sell a concept to learners. Who engages people for a living? Who spends their waking hours trying to provoke, stimulate, shock and humour people into changing behaviour? Marketing professionals. They're in the persuasion business. If you involve them (as we do) in 'learning projects', they are refreshingly disinterested in the efficacy of the design model or the details under the bonnet of your approach. They talk about how you're going to stimulate demand. Who are you trying to reach? With what message? Where do those people hang out now (physically and virtually)? How do we use those channels? What devices do they use? How are we going to get action?

These won't answer all of your design questions. But they're very useful starting points for understanding your learners and the channels to market you should use to reach them. It's also worth exploring the culture of the organisation or target audience, and understanding what's valued and celebrated, as well as attitudes to sharing and collaboration. For example, what do they tend to celebrate and communicate? How do they deal with mistakes? How open are people in sharing examples and stories? How do people collaborate and on what type of tasks?

The ideal blend caters for as many of these disparate groups as possible. We find that a really useful exercise at this stage is to define a number of typical learners (representing some of the extremes, e.g. one could be an activist, another a theorist and another could be very experienced, another a complete beginner). These are referred to in the software industry as personas.

This is a great exercise to do with subject matter experts or stakeholders, as it gets them to see that different delivery approaches and media types might be needed, possibly challenging preconceived ideas of how training should be delivered. It certainly helps in unearthing forgotten learning requirements. The aim is then to create a blend that appeals to all of these personas. Maybe not all of the time but certainly a lot of time!

Kim "Just tell me what I need to know"

- HR Specialist
- Works in Asia
- 42 years old
- College graduate
- Engaged in the process, just tell me what I should do…
- Slight training overload
- Comfortable with IT and computers
- Has the time to do the training
- Wants: Make it clear
- Has too much work
- Tends to work at home a lot – takes things home all the time!
- Looks up elearning tutorials or downloadable guides for help

Bob "I want the whole picture"

- IT Analyst
- Works at WHQ
- 34 years old
- College graduate
- Why am I doing this?
- Isn't this complex?
- Where are the principles?
- Don't want to be exposed sharing my thoughts
- No glitz please
- "I think I'm pretty good at this"– they think they are well organised
- Reads internal forum posts and expert's tips, but doesn't post to them
- Attends 'learning lunch' talks
- Subscribes to TED Talks

Jan "Let me have a go"

- Sports Marketing Specialist
- Works at EHQ
- 28 years old
- College graduate
- Thinks training is a lot of noise and a waste of time
- Just wants to know how fast they can get through the training
- Comfortable with IT and computers
- Get straight to it
- Sounds ideas out on Yammer with closed group of peers
- Googles quick tips to prep before tasks if needs some guidance
- Uses mobile apps for time and task management
- Uses YouTube to find quick 'how to's'

TIP
5

70:20:10 – a blend formula?

Although some would argue that 70:20:10 is a little old hat these days, we would suggest that it still can provide a useful and valuable framework to help you build a blended solution.

When you start to design your blend you need to look carefully at what you want to achieve and what you want to cover in your overall program.

There are a variety of ways in which you can do this. You can focus on the learning objectives or the key learning points or messages. For each of these, you need to assess what type of learning delivery is most suitable.

The following are the options you have and the topics/type of learning that are typically best suited (using the much used 70:20:10 categories of Lombardo and Eichinger).

The 10%: formal learning

Diagnostic tools	• Structured reflection • Self-assessment: capability/confidence/experience based • Diagnosing learner path/related resources
Virtual Classroom	• Live discussion and debate activities • Knowledge and experience sharing (from experts and fellow learners) • Practical activities and exercises – applying knowledge, problem solving • Skill building • Awareness raising
Standalone elearning resources such as scenarios, games, case studies, tutorials	• Knowledge development (good for processes and procedures, core job knowledge and principles) • Attitude changing
Video: tips and stories	• Knowledge sharing • Sharing experiences • Attitude changing

Online group simulations	• Decision-making skills and working in groups • Emulating the reality of the workplace Face-to-face pair or group tasks • Decision-making skills and working in groups • Sharing experiences
Webinars	• Knowledge sharing • Establishing community groups
Synchronised forum discussions and debates	• Knowledge sharing (from experts and fellow learners) • Practical activities and exercises – applying knowledge, problem solving
Mobile tips and apps	• Knowledge development • Practical exercises
Newsletters	• Awareness raising • Attitude changing • Knowledge development • Knowledge sharing
Online Content Curation & Sharing	• Attitude changing • Knowledge development • Knowledge sharing • Community Development
Expert blogs and online articles (pushed on portals, through Yammer etc).	• Attitude changing • Knowledge development • Knowledge sharing
Workbooks	• Structured reflection and work practice observation
Podcasts	• Knowledge sharing
Guided reading and research	• Knowledge gathering and sharing
Assessment and accreditation	• Confirmation that learners achieve their learning goals and identification of remaining learning gaps • Formal acknowledgement of knowledge and capability which helps build confidence and motivation and successful career paths

The 20%: feedback based

Coaching – virtual and/ or face-to-face	• Skills development and application of knowledge • Building an individual learner's commitment to change • Focusing on specific development areas for the individual learner (rather than the general needs a learner group may have) • Informal feedback and support during tasks, as well as formal feedback at end • Target and measure business improvements within the learner's remit
Mentoring – virtual and/ or face-to-face	• Providing positive role-modelling • Support and advice for long-term personal development • Informal feedback and support during tasks
Peers	• Informal or formal feedback from peers based on evidence from group learning activities, assignments, and on the job • Communities of Practice – collaborative, problem oriented, self-managed and directed

The 70%: informal (on-the-job experiences, tasks, and problem solving)

Performance support	• Just-in-time knowledge (which applied immediately helps build skills and competence)
Online collaboration and communities of practice (information sharing and wikis)	• Knowledge sharing • Collaborative, problem oriented, self- managed and directed
Assignments	• Experiential learning • Activities which can engage learners at different levels e.g. logical (the head), practical (hand) or emotional (heart) • Sharing experiences • Applying knowledge • Skill building • Awareness raising
Job rotation	• Knowledge development (good for processes and procedures, core job knowledge and principles) • Attitude changing
Action learning	• Knowledge development (good for processes and procedures, core job knowledge and principles) • Attitude changing Performance reviews • Knowledge sharing • Sharing experiences • Attitude changing What's new in blended learning?

This is not an exhaustive list, of course, but it demonstrates that you can build a comprehensive learning experience only if you apply an appropriate spread of them within your blend.

Check out how much of your blend is in that more traditional 10% formal learning camp. Obviously, a lot will be in there as, by definition, you are designing it. But, if you are a little light in the 70% area (the informal / on the job area) you should think about how much can you stimulate and support informal learning on the job.

What are the possible performance support channels or resources or communities of interest that you could add into your blend?

List out the available and popular communication channels and social hangouts (virtual and faceto- face) such as:

- LMS
- In-house messengers such as Yammer
- Forums
- Portals
- Community sites
- Video sites such as Vimeo or Vine
- Web or video conferencing
- Newsletters
- Learning Lunch talks / Google hangouts
- Action learning group meet-ups

A worked example: City & Guilds Way – the blend in detail

We created a portal to deliver the experience and whilst it houses formal learning resources, it's also a hub for more informal and community interventions. It's a rich source of inspirational, peer rated, sector specific content focusing on news, careers and employability.

Current and popular content is pushed to the surface to grab learners' attention and draw them into discussions on forums, games, competition, and further learning.

From the portal, learners can check their learning progress via their personalised learning route map. Here they can see their progress quickly and visually, as well as any areas where they might be falling behind. Tutors were a key group for us to support in this design so it also provides a handy tutor view, enabling them to see how their learners are getting on and early warning of those who might be falling behind.
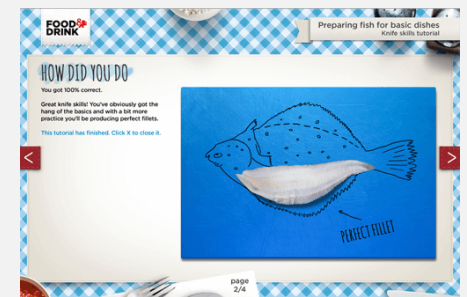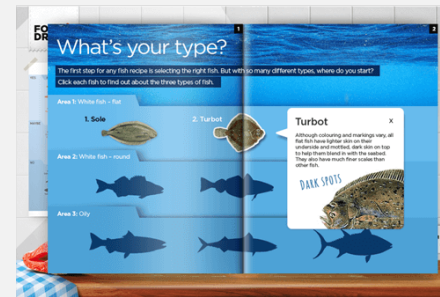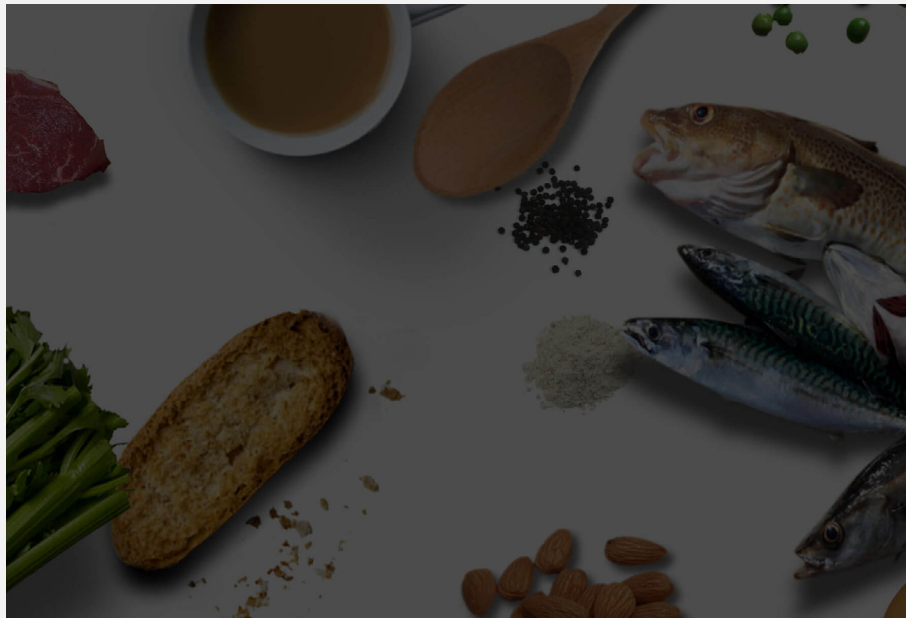
Engagement Layer

Gamification – To draw the audience in we designed a competitive engagement layer. Learners earn points and badges as they complete key tasks and milestones. As part of this we gave tutors an extra 'carrot' to dangle to more reluctant learners – they can set learners a challenge to earn bonus points for completion of a key activity.

Handwashing Game – In this short game learners watch the day in the life of a kitchen porter – as he conducts various tasks the learner needs to decide when the crucial handwashing moments are by pressing the soap dispenser. But they need to watch out as they only have a limited amount of soap so they need to spot the key moments. Did the engagement work?

> "They loved the idea of points. Oh my goodness, they became so competitive"

> Learners were drawn to their learning – 24% logged on outside of college

Online

Standalone elearning resources

A range of over 40 short, engaging digital resources targeted at our typical learner. For the learning content strategy we developed clear ideas about how to create resources that would capture their interest and imagination. They range from standalone videos and animations through to interactive tutorials, scenarios and case studies. Resources can be used independently or as directed by tutors as part of a classroom or webinar setting.

Here's some examples:
Dr Spotless – An animated 'graphic novel' style story which brings to life the impact and importance of hygiene in food safety.

When Dough Goes Wrong – An entertaining 'Crimewatch' style video that investigates the common culprits behind unrisen or undercooked bread.

Did it work? "The variety of different learning styles…I thought it was very impressive". 67% of learners agree they learnt more than expected (over a target of 60%).

Interactive PDFs
Here's an example of how, in contrast to some of the richer more animated resources, we produced some cost-effective interactivity in the form of interactive PDFs.

Curated videos
Learners who are exploring their future career options can browse an interactive video wall to hear what it's like straight from the horse's mouth. On this portal we made good use of existing content on the web – linking to YouTube and other sites to deliver great content. 100% of tutors think it's is a credible source of careers advice for learners.

Mobile app
This easy to use web app enables learners to check their knowledge and rate their confidence in key areas.

Virtual Classrooms
Tutor-led virtual classroom sessions can be run with cohorts of learners and make use of standalone digital resources as required.

Assessment and qualifications

Ongoing assessment and feedback
Progress and assignments could be reviewed by tutors, and they had ability to provide tailored feedback and set further tasks.

Online assessment and reward:
Points for achievements – Interacting through challenge and reward: Our engagement layer allows learners to collect XP points along the way – marking their progression and growing levels of expertise.

Digital Credentials (Badges)
Tutors could set extra challenges for key learners: 75% of learners who were set 'challenges' said they put in more effort. We also awarded learners with badges for key tasks which helped them develop their functional skills in maths, English and IT. In these areas learners are challenged to go from Beginner to Guru level. They can also unlock the 'Leader' badge which gives them a level of status and authority within the community.

CASE STUDY

Informal online

Curated news articles, podcasts and links
Taking a marketing campaignlike approach, we built in current industry news updates into the blend as well as links through to related articles or videos on YouTube to engage and enhance the experience beyond the formal learning, and mimic social media sites.

Formal offline

Classroom – practicals
Learners get stuck in to putting their cookery knowledge into action in the training kitchen – using online learning resources as references within these sessions.

Classroom – tutor-led sessions
Tutors provide further in-depth lessons and demonstrations in the classroom and can make use of the standalone digital resources to do so if required.
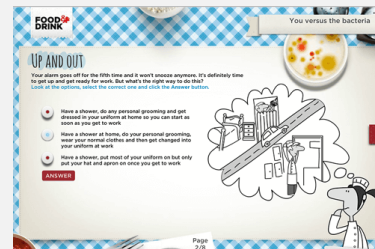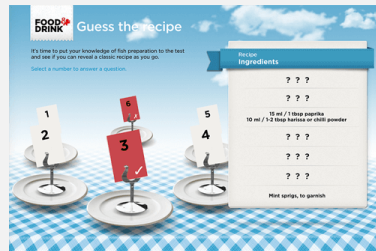
Performance Support

Online community
We implemented community functionality into the portal, empowering learners to create groups to share ideas and inspiration. It's also a channel for tutors and/or City & Guilds to broadcast messages and respond to queries. On each piece of content, learners add a rating and leave comments. We also tagged all the content, allowing learners to see a handy 'related content' box (a bit like 'Amazon recommends').

Coaching and Mentoring

Tutor feedback and coaching
Following individual student progress via the programme portal enabled tutors to keep track of their students' progress, set tasks and even keep certain learners on their 'watch list'. Tutors provide one-to-one feedback and coaching, and participate in the community as an expert contributor.

TIP 6

Think of a blend as a learning journey

If you have a rich mix of options in your blend you will find that you should have enough variety for everyone in terms of the learning opportunities available to them.

The key to success though, will be how you lay out that learning path. Too much of one learning approach at the beginning may de-motivate a particular learner, for example a series of workshops to start a blend might not be appealing to a strong theorist. They would want some background and detail early on to get the whole picture, an ideal scenario for some elearning before and between the virtual or physical workshops.

We will look at how you create these learning paths and overall structure your to blend at a later stage in the process. First, we have to take into account all the constraints such as technology infrastructure, budget, time to roll-out, etc. that will significantly modify our blend. It's time to get 'real'!

This is where thinking like a campaign specialist can help. By this point you probably have a high-level plan of all the elements that you'd like to include in your blend, but there is one thing missing: a vision of the learner journey.

Where do you want them to begin, and what's the best communication channels to kick off with? Some well-designed posters to plant seeds about the subject, an attention grabber that tells some stories and drives intrigue could follow, moving into the first elearning module to deliver deeper knowledge or a diagnostic game?

It's handy to create a quick reference matrix like our example, this would become a key part of your final blend design document.

Blend component (if applicable)	Delivery method	Learner time	Typical timeframe
Attention grabber	Animation	2 mins	Week 1
Our customers	Self-study elearning module	15 mins	Week 3
Handling customers	Virtual classroom	1 hour	Week 3
Coaching debrief etc	Meeting with line manager	30 mins	Week 4

Mapping each component to a typical average learner time (this could be down to a much more detailed level than the categories above) will allow you to plan how much you can expect your learners to do each week.

Even if the idea is to provide a wide spread of resources with a pre-ordained specific route through them, it is important that you visualise how typical learners might take their own paths and ensure the way you present these paths will be intuitive and useful. Obviously not all blends are linear in nature – it can be a genuine smorgasbord of options – with structure but no set linear curriculum.

As you'd hope with a strategic online campaign, there's likely to be an element of planned events and ideal routes through, and then an element of the organic and user-driven events, as people create spontaneous forum discussions, link through to other resources, or perhaps share items with one another. If you're taking a campaign-like approach to your blend, as part of your learner journey it may be useful to list out not only the 'planned' components, but also how you might monitor and be responsive to user-generated events.

TIP
7

It doesn't stop after you have designed your blend

Your role as a blended designer – or let's promote you to a new Learning Architect, shall we?! – must involve ensuring the vision is delivered.

So, you need to document it all first. This specification or blueprint tends to include the following sections:

Your blend design documentation

Business aims and key drivers for the learning

Breakdown of learning outcomes and profiles for the target audience (Available and viable communication channels)

Blend breakdown (description of each blend component, its delivery method, the average learner time to complete each component and typical timeframe in which this component is started and completed)

Assumptions behind the blend (a chance to state what pre-requisites are necessary e.g. line manager support if on-the-job coaching is a key part of your solution)

The business case for the blend (ROI, SOI or the total reduction in time to reach all learners)

Risk analysis (what are the risks and how will they be mitigated?)

Personnel and budget requirements for the blend

Responsibilities for overseeing and delivering each component in the blend

Initial project plan for designing and delivering the blend

This document will set out each of the components in the blend. The design and development of each component represents a work stream that may progress in parallel with others or may be linked directly to the completion of another.

The role of the blended designer is to brief each group involved so they understand how their part of the blend interacts with others. Ideally, you will have project managers and learning consultants / interactive designers for each of the work streams. The job of the blended learning designer is to ensure they stick to the initial blend blueprint and the final solution delivers the business case set out in the design document.

TIP
8

Manage, evaluate and respond

Blends are rarely perfect right out of the gate. You need to keep watching and listening and be prepared to adjust.

You should always think about the ongoing management after launch, especially if your blend is to provide sustained performance support. You want your campaign to be responsive and adjust to learner needs – that takes human effort.

We recommend you think about:

Who is going to programme manage and respond to the changes, and adjust course as needed?

Who will be the editorial voice to maintain consistency of tone?

How and when will you keep experts, tutors, coaches, mentors and line managers involved?

Who will moderate and be the voice in any feedback channels or forums?

What data will tell you what's working? MI from your LMS, Google Analytics from your Portal? Surveys with learner feedback?

What's the hard data telling you? You must target a change in agreed business metrics (e.g. reduction in accident levels, increase in reporting of potential security breaches, improved customer feedback)?

How will you stay responsive? Who will design and produce any quick interventions needed (e.g. a webinar to respond to an emerging theme, a quick guide for managers on how to deal with a business challenge?)

You need to plan in the ongoing programme and editorial management, along with regular reviews against your success criteria. Ultimately all blended learning solutions are judged on the results we achieve against the metrics that our organisations care about. Innovation is one thing – hard measurable results is quite another.

So align with the business from the outset, be open to all available methods, test and refine, and never stop measuring against your goals.

OK, so it doesn't fit on a t-shirt. But that should be the mantra of the new learning architect responsible for the next generation of blends.

Considering a campaign for change?

We've worked with several organisations on what we'd describe as a campaign-based approach to behaviour change. This has a foot in two camps: learning of course, but just as importantly, marketing. They're more tightly connected than sometimes we realise.

Marketing aims to attract, persuade, engage and convert people into believers – and so does great learning. Plus if you're looking at sustained performance improvements, you probably want to move beyond one-off training interventions, and look to sustained learning campaigns: successfully implemented, genuinely engaging, responds to changing needs, and provides performance support for the long term. Whether it's a campaignlike blend, driving traffic to your learning, or designing an elearning course for real impact, why not get in touch to explore ideas? You can also take a look at our thoughts on campaigns on our website.

Discover how we're shaping the future of learning

Everything we do at Kineo and The Oxford Group stems from a simple idea – if we design a better learning experience, together we'll get better results.

We've helped the world's leading businesses improve performance through learning and technology. We're proud of our reputation for being flexible and innovative, and of our award-winning work with clients across the world.

Whatever your business challenge, we will partner with you every step of the way to find the learning solution that fits best – and delivers results.

So, how can we help you?
Get in touch to discuss how we can support you with converting face-to-face to virtual, or for support on bespoke blends.

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