

Delivering Digital Skills

Ensuring Training Keeps Pace with Technological Change

Training provides the knowledge, skills and confidence that enable people to transition to new digital ways of working by:

- Explaining how to use new technologies in their roles
- Providing plenty of opportunities to practice in real-work scenarios
- Ensuring ongoing support as people apply the new ways of working to their daily tasks

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Executive Summary

Skills and competencies are changing. Technical still matters, mindset is becoming more important.

As the pace of technical change quickens executives are asking people to change their ways of working more often. Artificial Intelligence is just the latest iteration. We need people with a different type of mindset, one more akin to network thinking – open, random and supportive:

- Open to embracing whatever comes along technically
- Open to random ideas and knowledge, instability, chaos and risk
- Supportive of others around them.

Training is an essential part of helping people adapt to this network way of thinking. When it delivers both technical skills and open mindsets.

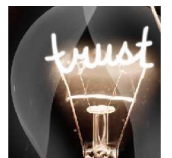
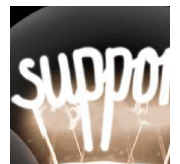
Our blood boils when we see organisations ignoring mindset change during transformation, when they focus on delivering new hardware and software but put minimal effort in to training so it is just an auditable tick box exercise.

Our experiences supporting transformation for numerous global organisations underline that training is multifaceted, tailored to culture and end user preferences, and instils new skills that are used day in, day out.

Our six phase training route map provides the stepping stones that slot into our client transformation programmes from scope, through design and migration, to business as usual.

We focus on comprehensive needs analysis, developing interactive and engaging learning, ongoing support post migration, and evaluation that demonstrates return on investment for our clients.

In this white paper we share our experiences working with our multinational clients. Unsurprisingly, they share similar challenges creating relevant training content, then persuading people to attend training sessions, and being certain their investment has delivered the benefits they expect.





1 Quality

- Training not interactive and engaging
- Trainer does all the talking and doesn't listen
- Content is theoretical rather than practical
- Trainer covers too much and people feel overwhelmed
- No support to talk through the issues people face when back in their jobs
- Difficult to find video content when want to refresh training

Timing 2

- Training is not available until migration
- Insufficient time for team to create training and manage take-up
- Training takes too much time away from day job
- No time to apply learning once back at work
- No training for new users after rollout completed
- Managers don't allow time away from job to do training



3 Value

- Users don't see need for the training
- No feedback on putting learning into practice
- No way to tell who has and hasn't done training
- No assessment of learning during training
- Training a tick-box exercise, not about learning
- People forget what they learnt once back at work





4 Finances

- There is no budget for training
- Team didn't include training in business case financials
- Training budget is being cut
- Budget is too small to cover the training needed
- No budget for follow-up after migration
- Training needs to be as cheap as possible
- Training budget belongs to another team

Delivery 5

- Training doesn't cover everything people need to know
- Training is too quick, people can't take everything in
- Training is confusing, people don't understand
- People don't remember when they try to put learning into practice
- No backup materials, nowhere to go to find out what to do
- Training is like going back to school



Essential Skills for Global Businesses in 2027

Curiosity & lifelong learning
Leadership & social influence
Motivation & self-awareness
AI & Big Data
Empathy & active listening
Creative thinking
Design & user experience
Technological literacy
Analytical thinking
Resilience, flexibility & agility

Ensuring Training Delivers

Training is effective when participants improve their knowledge, skills and abilities. When both they and their management can see this has happened.

Most users' concerns about new technologies are linked to their lack of experience using the new software and hardware. The new ways of working may not be intuitive.

Even when people are competent and confident in their jobs, they still need handholding while learning new ways of working. And of course this varies by person, some need more handholding than others.

They may be unwilling to shine a spotlight on their need for support; or distrust leaders' abilities to listen and provide the support they want.

Thus, a key part of training provision is opportunities for people to ask for support when they believe they need it, and the ability to raise concerns and ask questions whenever.

Changing Mindsets

In contrast, most training focuses on delivering technical knowhow and misses the mindset change needed for people to confidently use the new technology once it is rolled out.

Too often training is a one-size-fits-all that is delivered once in the classroom or virtually. People are expected to take significant time away from their desks to do the training and there is no followup to check what they have absorbed and if they can apply the new knowledge in their work.

People attending training courses may not know why they are there, what the course is all about and how it relates to their day-to-day work.

"Even though I've had two training sessions, I'm not sure I will be able to use the system, it will take time to learn."

It is rare for everyone to participate in training without a great deal of focussed effort by the programme team. So much is going on in workplaces. People may have holiday booked, demanding clients, be in the middle of contract negotiations, or their managers may not allow them to take time away for training.

Additionally, the gap between learning and application may be too great, whether people are using the new application every day or occasionally in the month. When they open the app they have forgotten what to do, don't know where to go to find out, and don't want to spend precious time figuring this out.

Growing Competence and Confidence

Training succeeds when people apply newly learnt skills and abilities in their daily work, and in doing so help their teams improve performance.

This means training is a learning experience, rather than a tick box exercise, participants understand what they are learning, remember afterwards, know how to apply what they have learnt once they are back at their desks, and choose to do so.

Technology users know what they want from training:

- Interactive and easy to access
- Short and specific
- Clear and easy to understand
- Easy to find when needed
- Variety and multiple formats
- Personal and relevant to them.

One of the secrets for ensuring this happens is choosing training options that fit both your organisation and each individual's learning styles.

There are multiple options, here are your key choices:

- 4 development types – academic qualifications, professional qualifications, work skills training, interpersonal skills
- 5 delivery options – personalised buddying, classroom face2face, interactive webinars, pre-recorded videos, online e-learning
- 2 delivery styles – group learning, one2one learning.
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Training Needs Analysis

The effective way of choosing between these options is with an analysis of training needs. This is a piece of research that solicits the views of end users and their line managers. Outputs give a baseline for measuring learning against, as well as identifying skill and knowledge gaps, previous training experiences, training preferences, potential issues including resistance, and other priorities for individuals and teams that may prevent them completing training.

Choosing the Trainers

The final piece when choosing between the training options, is selecting the individual or team who will deliver training. It may be that you have inhouse trainers with the time and expertise to create then deliver the content for your programme. Otherwise, you will turn to external experts. They may manage the whole training package for you, or create the content and then train members of your team and change agents to deliver under their guidance.

Benefits and Downsides of Each Option

	Benefits	Downsides
Academic Qualifications	Learn theoretical basis; highly knowledgeable lecturers; improves promotion prospects	Theory may not be relevant in practice; time consuming; expensive fees; examinations
Professional Qualifications	Learn to apply theory to real work situations; improves promotion prospects; enables membership of professional association	Time consuming, expensive fees; examinations
Works Skills Training	Wide range of courses on specific topics; can target areas of weakness; short courses; tutors are practitioners	Attend during working hours, expensive
Interpersonal Skills	Wide range of courses on specific topics; can target areas of weakness; short courses; tutors are practitioners	Attend during working hours, expensive
Group Learning	Learn from experiences of other participants; share own experiences	May not be able to share personal experiences or commercially confidential information
One2One Learning	Learning and content can be personalised to participant; can share in confidence	Only share with trainer; no other participants to learn from
Buddying	Practical application of learning in real work situations; get feedback on what works and doesn't work; able to try alternatives and discuss with mentor	Time consuming for mentor and person they are buddying
Classroom	Dedicated space with technology needed; personal interaction with trainer and other participants; concentration easier; trainer can see body language and facial expressions so knows how engaged learners are	Participants away from the office for duration of course; not available to deal with work issues; time consuming; expensive
Webinars	More affordable; less time consuming; delivery in different time zones and languages	Harder to concentrate; hard to tell if participants are engaging in training; some participants switch cameras off; trainer needs experience at engaging when participants are remote
Videos	Short videos allow people to learn in small chunks as and when they need to apply knowledge in their roles; affordable; relevant to jobs; available globally	Videos that are too long; poor referencing makes topics hard to find; no interaction; hard to confirm learning is occurring
E-learning	Bite-sized learning available as and when needed; available globally	Time consuming and expensive to create high quality e-learning modules; difficult to track who completes each module; hard to confirm learning is occurring

Crafting Effective Training

Comprehensive planning, thorough preparation, tailored content, empathic trainers, intuitive delivery, focused evaluation, all ensure high training take-up and new technologies becoming business-as-usual after migration.

Working collaboratively with our clients, we develop a six-stage strategic training framework for their change and transformation programmes that ensure people can use new systems in their daily roles.

1. Training Needs Analysis

We begin with a pre-training consultation that assesses current experiences of training - what is working and not working, skill and knowledge gaps, expectations of how and when training will be delivered, how much time people are willing to give to training, preferred training delivery methods, delivery locations, what is most important between mindsets, competence and confidence, what will cause people to resist and engage with training.

Outputs include detailed recommendations for delivery methods, training content, course materials, trainers, delivery locations, timescales, post-training support, monitoring and measurement.

This consultation also helps strengthen trust and credibility between the programme team and business unit managers whose support we will need in releasing their teams to participate in the training.

2. Logical Training Plan

Our training plans document how training supports changing mindsets and working practices, and are tailored to each client's business imperatives.

They typically include purpose, SMART objectives, training participants, opinion formers and influencers whose support is needed, learning objectives, benefits for participants and the organisation, content outline, resources required, delivery methods, delivery schedule, delivery locations, invitation process, roles and responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation.

3. Creative Content Development

During this phase we create all the training materials. Depending on the delivery method, this may include:

- Case studies, small and whole group exercises, peer exchange, brainstorming, role plays, simulations, checklists, discussions
- Lecture notes, powerpoint slides, manual with plenty of space for note taking
- Script writing, storyboarding, filming, editing, uploading to a learning portal.

4. Practical Training Delivery

Interactive training delivered using one or more of the delivery options - face2face in the classroom or via video conferencing, buddying with change agents, online via e-learning, short videos in a learning portal.

Training can be one2one or in small groups with a maximum of 15 participants, ensuring all receive personal attention from the trainer.

5. Post-training Support

Follow up support helps participants work through issues applying their new knowledge and skills once they are back at their desks. It allows people to raise issues in a safe space and also share positive experiences from their new ways of working.

Participants develop the confidence that they can work effectively using the new systems, processes and tools.

Options for delivering this support include regular live webinars, recorded videos and audio podcasts, briefing updates, personal and group mentoring.

6. Evaluation

Monitoring and measurement of training delivery and participant feedback, against agreed benchmarks, to ensure high levels of participation and satisfaction, with timely corrective actions as and when needed.

An after action review will compare expectations with what actually happened, what worked well and didn't work, and learnings for future training activities.

An evaluation report with prioritised key findings, recommendations and detailed analysis of training data. Participant feedback and the after action review.

End Users Trust Transformation

End users feel valued and are pleased the transformation team cares about their experiences and that their views are being taken into account as training is developed and delivered.

They know some of their colleagues helped develop the training content and are hearing on the grapevine that peers they respect believe training will be useful and relevant this time.

Their managers feel reassured that training will give team members information and skills they need for the new ways of working; training won't be a waste of time.

Customer commitments are being shared across teams, so people can give their full attention to learning - without constant interruptions from mobile calls and messages - when their training turn comes around.

People are trained in small groups, either face2face or virtually online, depending on where they are in the world. There is plenty of interaction with other participants and the trainer. They have a safe space to ask any questions, make mistakes and learn at their own pace.

They feel encouraged and supported, making them more likely to retain what they learn and practice. They can say when they don't understand without being judged.

The content they find easy to understand as it is structured in bite-sized chunks for when they are back at their desks and need to quickly double check how to do something.

Refresher videos are easy to navigate and find the information they want, and the regular online Q&A sessions are helpful for raising issues as they use their new knowledge.

Executives feel the investment in training has been valuable and are surprised at how few issues there have been since rollout.

Our clients experience this each time we provide training during their digital transformation programmes.

In summary, we promise:

- Comprehensive training content is relevant to the organisation's needs
- Collaborative content delivery that matches programme needs
- Greater training take-up that is supported by line managers
- Learning is directly relevant to people's roles
- People apply what they learnt when they are back in the workplace
- People feel supported and are confident with the new ways of working.

Effective Training Delivery



1 Needs Analysis

Understanding end users mindsets, skills, knowledge, expectations, preferences, support and resistance

2 Training Plan

Clear processes for delivering training tailored to your organisation structure and culture



3 Content Creation

Developing training materials online, printed, audio and video in collaboration with you



4 Training Delivery

Interactive classroom, online and video delivery to end users wherever they are



5 Ongoing Support

Helping end users work through issues applying new knowledge and skills in their roles



6 Evaluation

Monitoring outputs, outcomes, value and differentiation to prove RoI for both technology and people change activities



Bringing in an Outside Perspective

Would you like to have a conversation about the training challenges you are facing, and begin to uncover root causes and consequences? Then let's talk.

Sweeney Communications and Merrill Consultants partner to deliver our clients' digital transformation training needs.

Merrill Consultants develops and delivers the technical training, while Sweeney Communications conducts training needs analysis as well as developing and delivering stakeholder engagement and communications, plus monitoring and evaluating training effectiveness.

About Sweeney Communications

Sweeney Communications leads on training needs analysis, developing comprehensive training plans, post training support and evaluation.

Sweeney Communications is a virtual stakeholder engagement consultancy based in the United Kingdom and supporting change and digital transformation in the telecommunications, IT and energy sectors.

We are known for clearly explaining technical and complex information so stakeholders understand both the detail and relevance to themselves.

Our results-focused approach ensures change and transformation activities achieve their objectives, meet stakeholder expectations, make best use of resources and deliver value to reputation and the bottom line.

"With your just-do-it mindset you acted as a lightning rod conductor, making things happen."

"You've been the voice of reason in a fog of uncertainty."

There is no way I could have delivered without your support. You have made the technology delivery piece easier."



About Merrill Consultants

Merrill Consultants leads on developing the training content and training delivery.

Merrill Consultants is a boutique training company known for our professionalism and supportive client relationships.

We make learning interesting, fun and customised to your scenarios and needs.

We partner with IT project teams, software houses, HR and change managers to support your stakeholders as they transition into their new world.

Our team help you feel good about the new systems and ways of working, by taking processes and turning them into easy-to-understand workflows thus creating win-win for everyone.

Their commitment, knowledge and understanding were excellent. We were impressed with their ability to perform as part of a team and also to work independently resolving any issues and organising themselves."

"Stuart and Valerie have been a revelation – they have been a calming, positive influence on a despondent team, who were daunted by the task ahead of them. Their professional and "can do" attitude has inspired others and helped the team achieve extremely difficult goals"



Would you like to replicate these achievements? Let's have a conversation and talk through your challenges

			
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