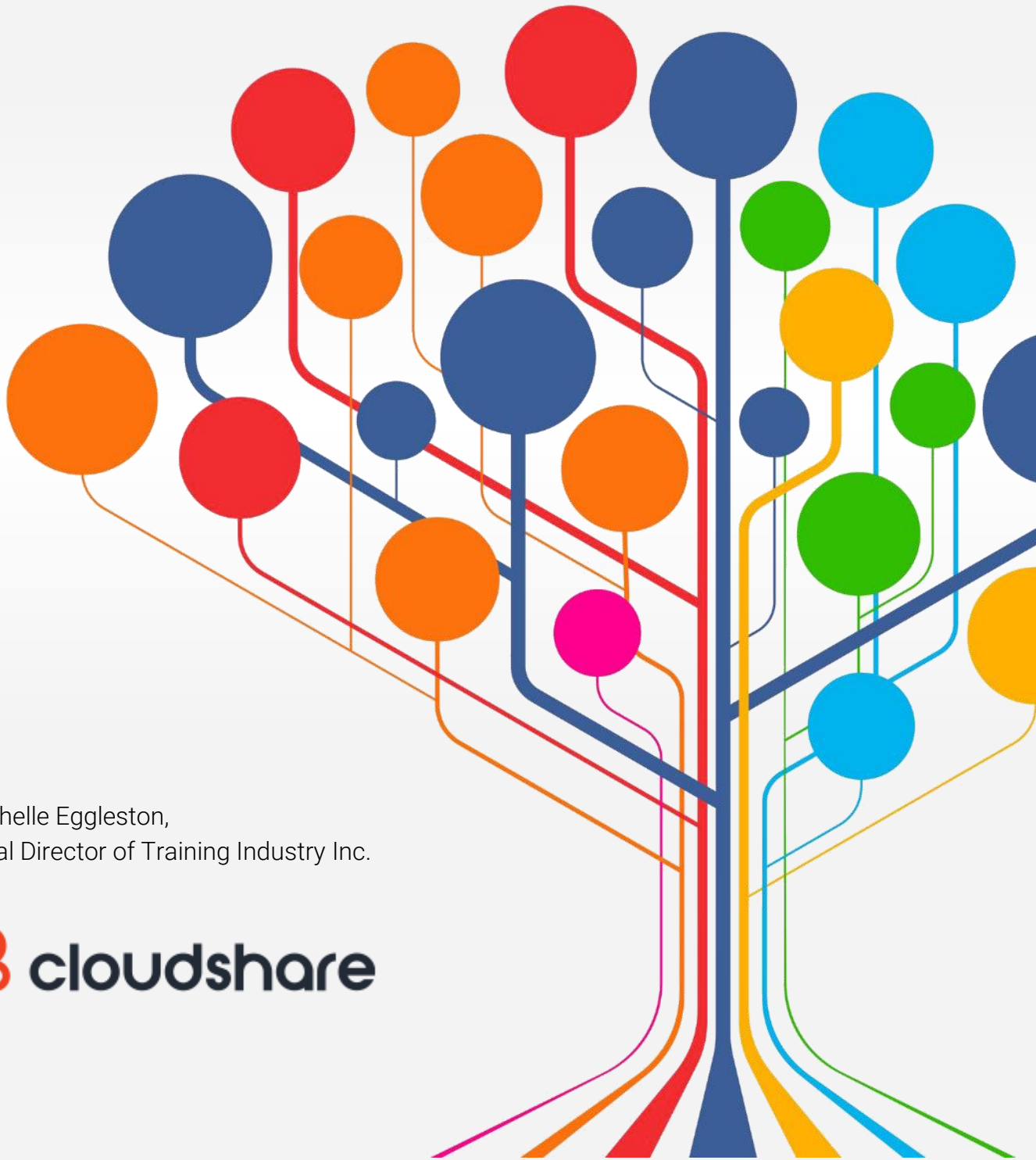


Bringing IT Training to Life:

Customer Education in the Cloud

By Michelle Eggleston,
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In today's fast-paced business market, cloud-based IT training programs can provide companies with a competitive advantage. Providing access to technical training from anywhere, at any time, can speed up software adoption, increase customer satisfaction, grow new revenue channels and generate long-lasting results.

Cloud-based training allows organizations to deploy customer education on a global scale. Virtual training labs provide IT professionals who operate in complex software environments with a realistic, hands-on learning experience to practice in a no-risk atmosphere.

Many organizations have not yet made the shift toward virtualizing their technical training environment. Classroom training is still a dominant delivery method for technical training. While the demand for in-person training may continue, virtual training, whether instructor led or self-paced, is a cost-effective solution for training a dispersed audience.

"The virtual classroom isn't just something that would be nice to do, it's here and it's solid and it's reliable," said Kevin Streater, director of global training sales at ForgeRock, a software organization with \$100 million sales in 2016.

And Streater should know. A pioneer in virtual training, Streater's [ForgeRock University](#) has been providing only cloud-based training options for its customers and partners for the last two years and is not going back.

Advantages of Cloud Technology

Technology is transforming the way organizations are conducting business and educating employees, customers and partners. Streater, who has made vast efforts to build a training organization that is entirely cloud based, understands the need to go virtual when resources are limited and learners are dispersed.

“We’re moving to a world where setting up and delivering classes should be very light on resource requirements, and my organization is. I have a very lean operations team, which means we can put all our resource efforts into developing content and improving the quality of content, rather than building a classroom,” Streater added.

“We can put our focus where we want it to be, which is on creating quality content and making sure students perform better.”

Scaling a training operation at the speed in which ForgeRock has managed is difficult enough, but it can be even more difficult without investment in the proper systems, processes and tools.

Streater credits his success to his fully integrated cloud-based solution which is anchored by [CloudShare’s virtual training lab environment](#) and the [Administrate](#) training management system. The fully, cloud-based solution enables ForgeRock to scale up training operations quickly, easily and cost-effectively.

On-Demand Training: Anywhere, Anytime

Organizations must be able to provide training to customers, regardless of where they’re located. Virtual training allows organizations to do this easily while retaining control over the quality and consistency of the learning experience.

For example, organizations only need to build a virtual cloud-based training environment once and then replicate it moving forward. Organizations can also assign access times to support instructor-led training, self-paced courses, and certification programs, while enabling learners to practice key skills at their discretion within the parameters.

These features help control cost and ensure that every student receives the same experience. The cloud-based platform also enables the training team to log into a learner’s lab environment and provide support, no matter where learners are located.

Practice in a No-Risk Environment

Cloud-based lab environments allow learners to practice using software applications in a no-risk, no-fail setting. Students can learn from their mistakes and navigate through the application at their own pace. This is especially important for IT security software, according to Robert Lillywhite, global technical enablement manager at security giant, [Sophos](#).

“We passionately believe that practical hands-on experience is vital to aiding understanding and retention of the material by learners,” Lillywhite explained. “I would go as far as to say that the vast majority of learners taking technical training require practical hands-on activities to form a clear understanding of a topic.”

With so much at stake in a complex software environment, the user must have a vast understanding of the product and the confidence that they are using the product correctly. Practice is fundamental to gaining the confidence and skills necessary to maintain a secure network. The ability to simulate real-life scenarios is a critical feature of cloud-based training labs.

“We can now confidently use an environment that simulates a company with multiple sites, multiple separate networks at each site, and redundant internet connections,” said Lillywhite.

“It is this ability to replicate complex real-world scenarios for use in our training labs that is key to our program. We can relate what the student is learning in the classroom to what they will experience when they go to install and use our products in their day-to-day jobs.”

Achieving Measurable Impact

Cloud-based training enables the ease of tracking learner performance and engagement. Organizations can see how much time is spent on learning exercises, self-paced assignments, videos or assessments.

Linking the learning management system to other cloud-based platforms in the virtual training solution can capture further analytics and performance data. Organizations can leverage the data and analytics to assist learners and improve the learning experience.

Training can provide the user with the necessary skill and knowledge to achieve a successful software adoption. When it comes to the impact that virtual training can have on the business' bottom line, Lillywhite explained, **"a trained partner generates an average of six times the revenue of a non-trained one."** In FY 2017, we had over 8,000 partners complete training courses supported by CloudShare labs."

Streater adds that **cloud-based training has enabled him to bring ForgeRock's partner business from zero two years ago to 25 percent of revenues.** Having certified partners who can deploy solutions based on their technology around the world has enabled them to grow quickly on a global scale.

Moving to the Cloud

There is a challenge to moving out of the classroom without losing the classroom experience. This is a concern and hesitation point for many organizations when considering a virtual environment for IT training.

Cloud-based platforms can seamlessly replicate a classroom environment and bring IT training to life, which not only enables the practice and application of key skills, but also results in cost savings for the business and on-demand access for consumers.

When asked about what he likes best about moving to a fully cloud-based training model, Streater brags that he hasn't had to say no to any customer training request since the move and adds, "I like to be able to sit anywhere in the world and know what's going on with my business. That's what cloud-based training environments give me.

I have complete visibility as to what all our learners are doing, have done or are planning to do. Virtual classrooms give me that insight into knowing that we're providing the right skills to our customers."



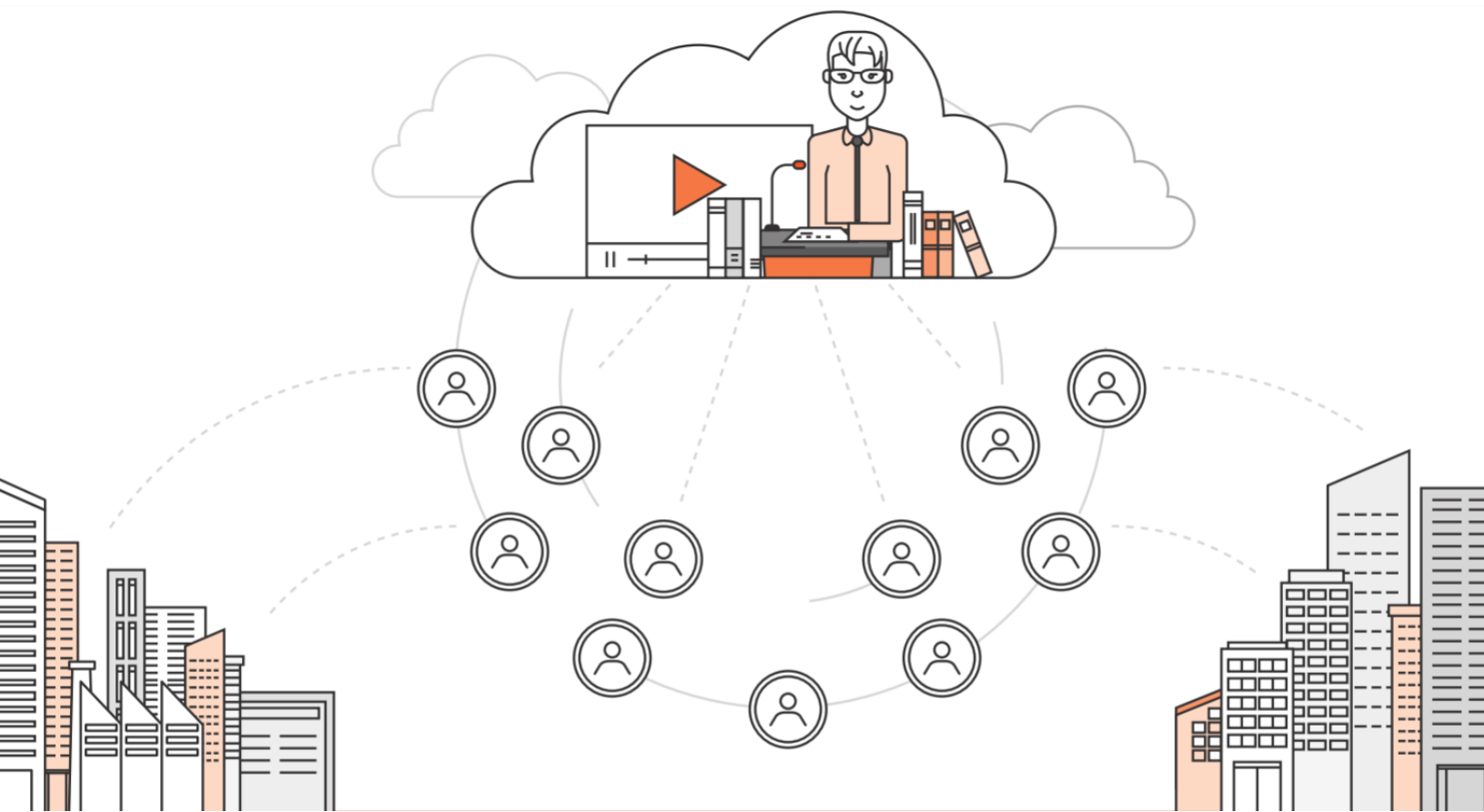
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About the Author

Michelle Eggleston is the editorial director of Training Industry Magazine. She has more than eight years of experience writing, editing and managing publications. From newsletters to magazine production, she plans and develops thought-provoking content that resonates with a target audience. Eggleston holds a bachelor's degree from NC State University in English with a concentration in creative writing. Connect with Michelle on [LinkedIn](#).

