2016 Benchmark Report:

The State of Online Training

Benchmarks in hybrid and virtual instructor-led training for corporate learning and development

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Executive Summary

Tools expand the reach and effectiveness of the trainer.

As training modalities like hybrid or virtual instructor-led training (ILT) are applied, the abilities of the training professional are transformed. Attention must be given to helping both trainers and learners become comfortable with and master the capabilities of the learning environment.

Technology provides immediacy.

Rather than being used as a broadcast service to reach large numbers of learners, the strength of technology-supported ILT is in providing access immediately to learning that is easily set up, conducted and measured. Frequently, small virtual training sessions effectively overcome challenges of learner availability.

Ease of use matters.

Training professionals wear many hats, managing many aspects of the planning, delivery and assessment of training, so it is important that technology is easily used and robustly supported.

Barriers are lowered.

Instructor-led training through technology lowers barriers of scheduling (aiding both learners and trainers), making it possible to unify training and training resources across many locations, and facilitates the management of learning programs with centralized registration and measurement.

Methodology and Terminology

This report was prepared by Training Industry, Inc. on behalf of Citrix Systems, Inc., using data from Training Industry's library of original research and GoToTraining user research, gathered by Citrix. These data were analyzed independently by Training Industry analysts.

In this report, the following terms are defined as follows:

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) refers to training that is delivered in a virtual or simulated environment, or when instructor and learner are in separate locations. Virtual instruction environments are designed to simulate the traditional classroom or learning experience. VILT can be conducted synchronously or asynchronously. The term is also referred to as Virtual Classroom Training (VCT).

Hybrid Instructor-Led Training (HILT) incorporates both a traditional classroom setting and virtual learning environment. This allows learners from remote locations to interact and participate in an instructor-led classroom through the use of technology.

E-Learning is self-paced learning in which students use technology to access training or courseware, without instructor intervention or direct participation, and is delivered asynchronously.

Face-to-Face Learning refers to traditional learning environments in which an instructor and student interact in person, and can include one-on-one, classroom or lecture structures.

This benchmarking report is intended to provide training professionals and training managers with useful contextual data against which to compare their own performance, structure, programs and resourcing decisions, in order to improve the operations and effectiveness of their training organizations.
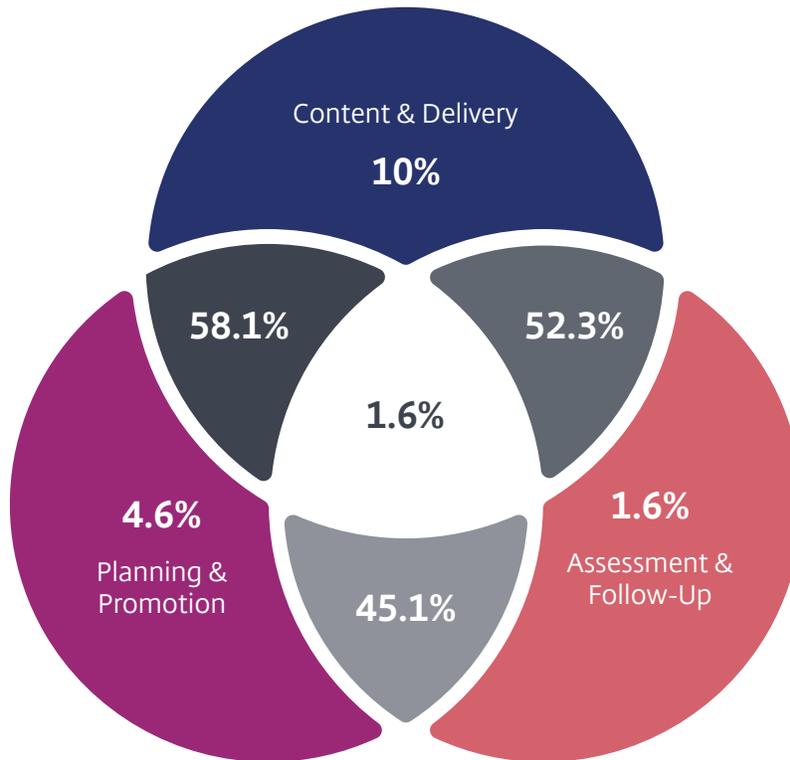
The Role of the Training Professional

Training professionals wear many hats. In practice, trainers are tasked with multiple phases of the lifecycle of a training session, including planning, promotion, scheduling, content development, delivery and assessment. Ease of use is an essential attribute of the technology tools used to support these tasks.

Areas of Responsibility

Training professionals are responsible for the planning, promotion, scheduling, preparation, delivery and assessment of training.
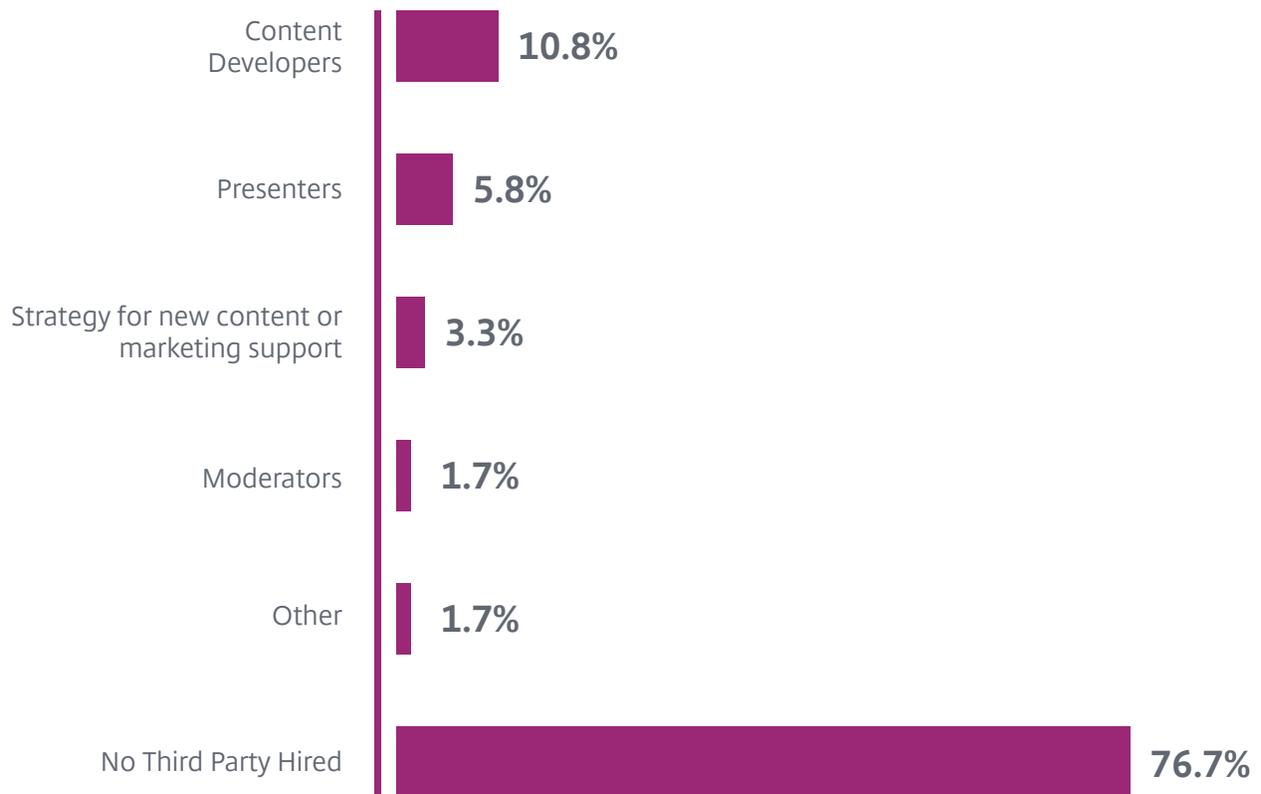

Content & Delivery
10%

58.1%

52.3%

1.6%

4.6%
Planning & Promotion

45.1%

1.6%
Assessment & Follow-Up

The majority of professionals in hybrid and virtual instructor-led training programs are responsible for more than one part of the process.

Only one in 10 trainers are responsible solely for the preparation and delivery of training materials; most (58%) are responsible for planning, scheduling, promotion and registration activities, in addition to the preparation and delivery of training, but are not tasked with assessment and other post-session activities.

Nearly half of training professionals are asked to do it all.

Approximately 45.1 percent of training professionals are responsible for all aspects of the training process, planning, promotion, content development, organization, instruction or presentation, editing recorded trainings for distribution, post-session follow-up with learners, and the assessment of outcomes. Additionally, more than half are responsible for at least two of the three main activity areas (planning, delivery and follow-up).

Among those who organize or develop content for training, most do not use third-party services.

Category	Percentage
Content Developers	10.8%
Presenters	5.8%
Strategy for new content or marketing support	3.3%
Moderators	1.7%
Other	1.7%
No Third Party Hired	76.7%

Those responsible for content development, in general, do so without the support of external ("third party") resources. However, more than 10 percent of those with content development responsibility report using an external resource for content development.

It is notable that, in most organizations, purchase decisions about learning technology are most frequently made at the management and executive level; instructors, trainers and similar instructional staff do not play a leading role in these decisions, according to Training Industry research. The needs of training professionals should be considered as technology-enabled training tools are selected, to ensure a strong match between vendor and tool attributes that support the needs of both the trainer and the buying organization.

> 66 Almost half of training professionals handle all facets of planning, delivery and measurement. 99

Corporate Training Modalities

Technology-enabled live training, comprised of both virtual and hybrid instructor-led training, is the most frequently offered training modality.

Training offered by modality.

Classroom ILT	Virtual ILT	Hybrid ILT	E-Learning	All Others
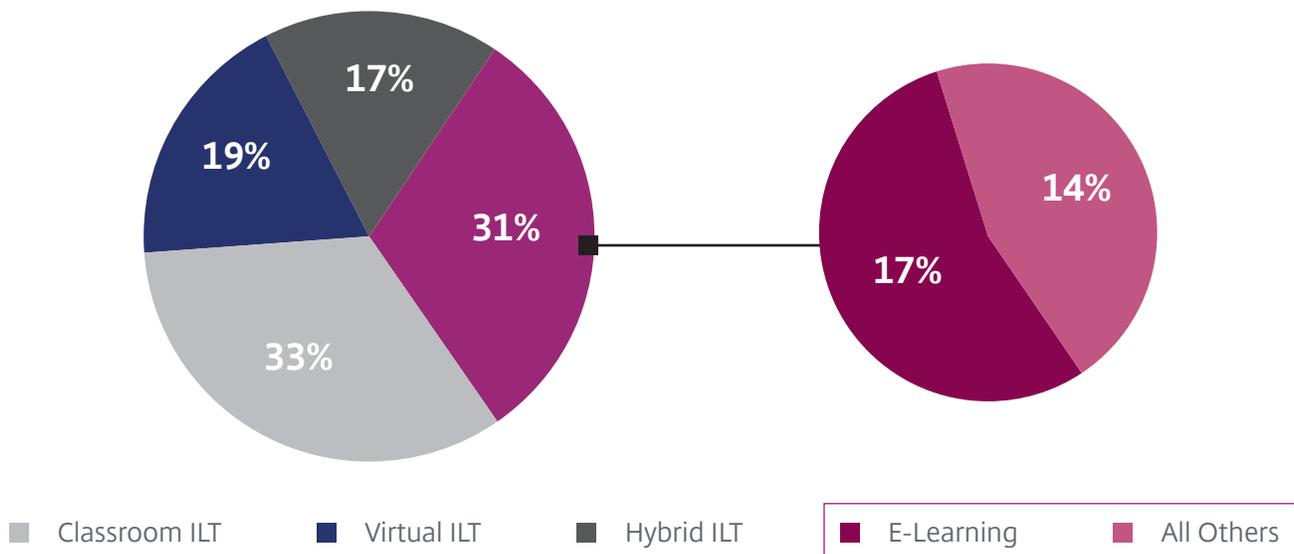
> " **Technology has not decreased the demand for instructor-led training, but gives instructors new tools to reach learners.** "

Hybrid instructor-led training and virtual instructor-led training, combined, represent 36 percent of all corporate training sessions, outpacing traditional classroom-based training sessions, which represent 33 percent of all sessions. Asynchronous e-learning accounts for a further 31 percent of sessions.
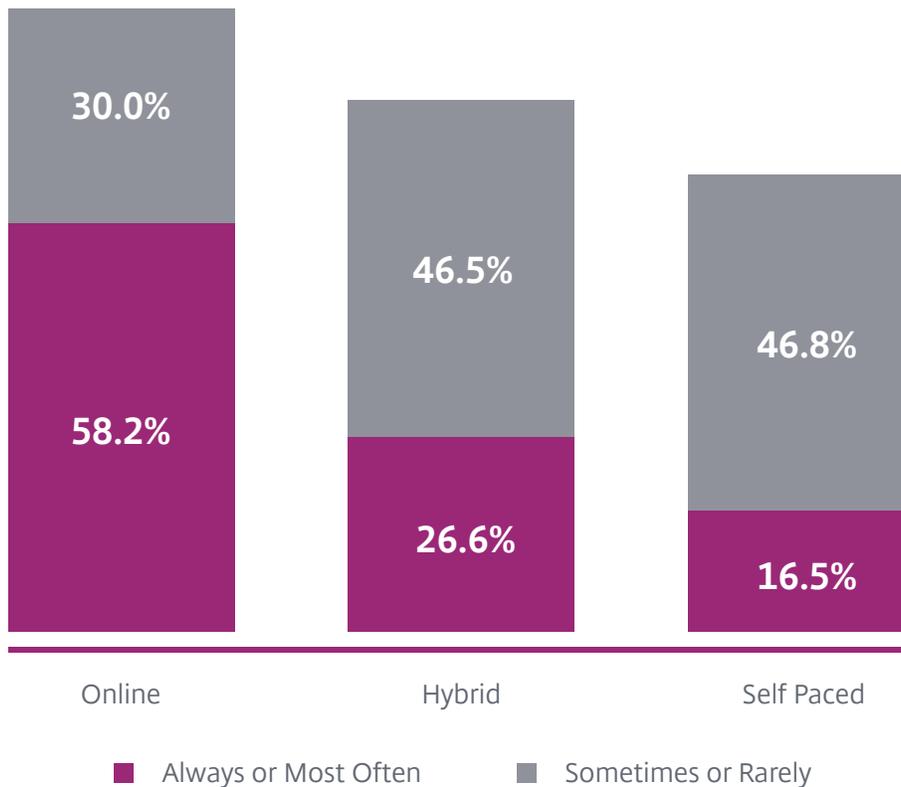
The trend in instructor-led learning is enablement through technology, both in hybrid and fully virtual delivery. As this shifts, the instructor remains important: even as more technology-enabled training sessions are offered, the overall proportion of training led by an instructor has remained constant.

Nearly 70 percent of corporate training is instructor-led.

Among users of technology-enabled learning platforms, it is most common for instructor-led training to be offered fully online, compared to hybrid or e-learning modalities: 58 percent say fully online sessions are offered "always" or "most of the time." In general, professionals who use learning technologies tend to be enthusiastic adopters of the modality, and are more likely to conduct fully virtual training sessions.

> " Those who avidly use technology are more likely to adopt the tools to offer training fully online. "

Users of technology-enabled learning most often conduct fully online sessions.

	Online	Hybrid	Self Paced
Sometimes or Rarely	30.0%	46.5%	46.8%
Always or Most Often	58.2%	26.6%	16.5%

■ Always or Most Often   ■ Sometimes or Rarely
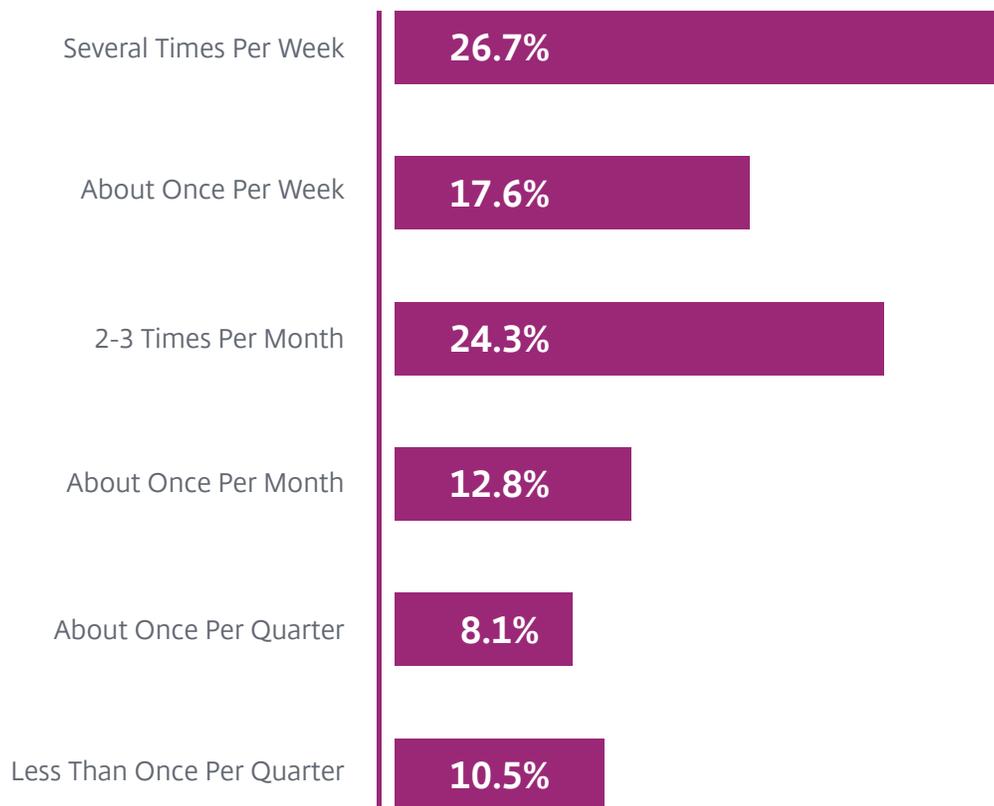
Pre-Training Activities

Before a training session is conducted, the training professional conducts necessary pre-work, including the scheduling and promotion of the session, identification of presenters and necessary resources and the coordination and preparation of topics and content.

A best practice in planning a training session is to anticipate not only those tasks necessary that lead up to the live training session, but also to anticipate and begin to build structures in advance for post-training activities such as assessment and follow-up.

Session Planning

Technology-enabled learning tools empower the trainer to be responsive to the needs of learners, which is reflected by sessions offered more frequently and to smaller numbers of students.

Most technology-enabled trainers conduct sessions frequently.

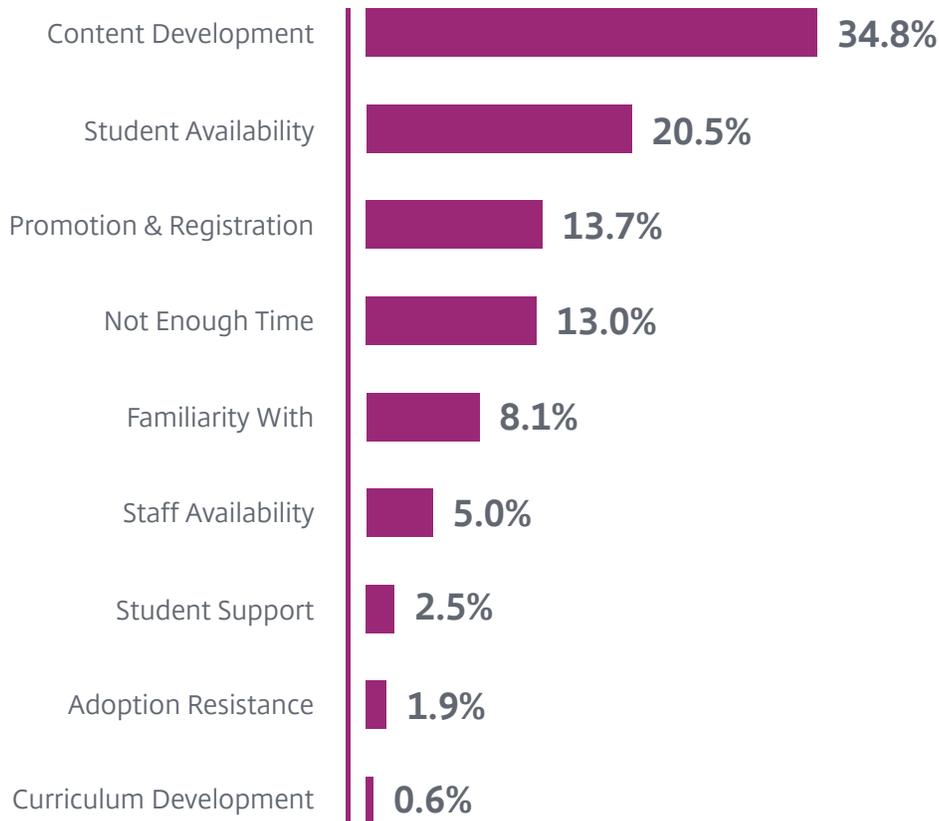|	
Several Times Per Week	**26.7%**
About Once Per Week	**17.6%**
2-3 Times Per Month	**24.3%**
About Once Per Month	**12.8%**
About Once Per Quarter	**8.1%**
Less Than Once Per Quarter	**10.5%**

Among training professionals who conduct hybrid or virtual instructor-led training, sessions are held at least **two to three times each month (68.6%)**.

Biggest Challenges in Content Development

When planning training, content development is the single most frequently-cited challenge of trainers.

Most common planning challenges.

Challenge	Percentage
Content Development	34.8%
Student Availability	20.5%
Promotion & Registration	13.7%
Not Enough Time	13.0%
Familiarity With	8.1%
Staff Availability	5.0%
Student Support	2.5%
Adoption Resistance	1.9%
Curriculum Development	0.6%

" **A key driver of success is whether the content has been designed for hybrid or virtual delivery.** "

Other frequently-cited obstacles to training include difficulties with session promotion and student registration, such as limited student availability and scheduling constraints faced by the trainer. Challenges with the technology tool or platform were cited as an obstacle far less frequently (just 8.1%).

This is especially interesting because one of the core promises of HILT/VILT is to reduce the impact of scheduling constraints and to lower barriers to training. This is being addressed in practice by trainers using technology to conduct frequent sessions, often planned and delivered on short timetables, as evidenced by the significant proportion of sessions initiated and conducted in just a few days from start to finish.

In most cases, content is prepared quickly. Nearly half (49%) of trainers prepare content in less than a week, and 80 percent of trainers take two weeks or less to prepare. There is a risk that the organization's investment in staff hours for training may not be well-served if trainers are not afforded adequate time to prepare content and anticipate post-training measurement.

> " The investment in staff hours … may not be well-served if trainers are not afforded adequate time to prepare content … and post-training measurement. "

Length of time needed to prepare training materials.

A Few Days	1-2 Weeks	3-4 Weeks	5-6 Weeks	7 Weeks or More
49.1%	30.9%	15.2%	3.6%	1.2%
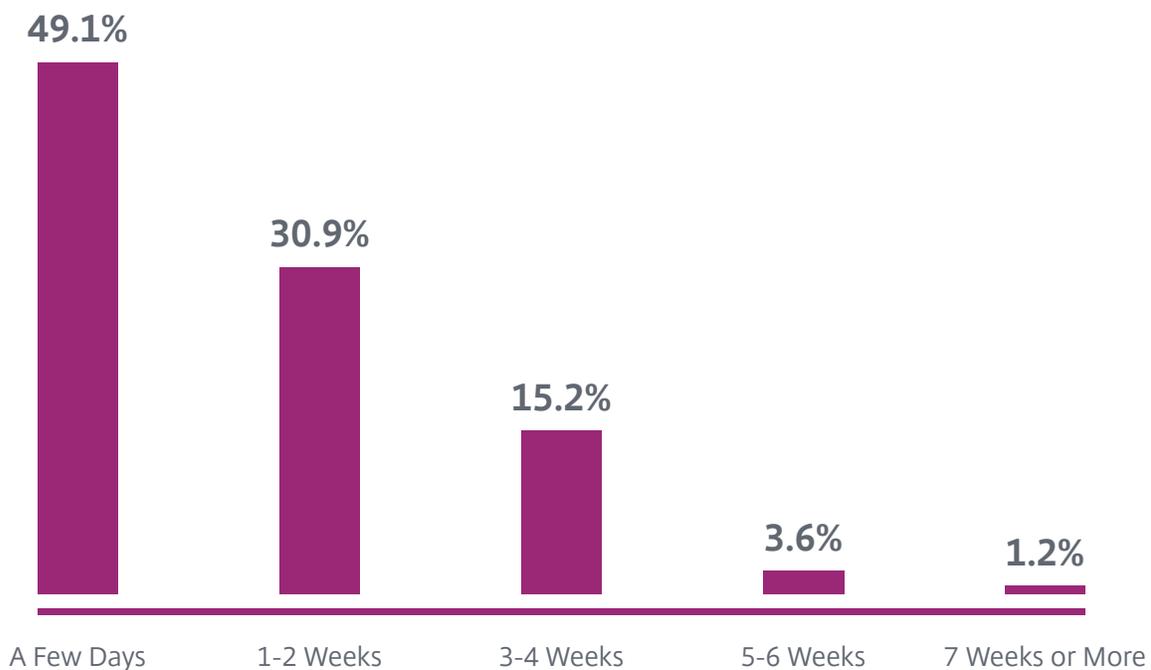
Learner Registration

Technology-enabled training makes it possible for the training organization to be more responsive to the needs of the organization and of the learner, by bridging distances and providing a rapid response to training needs, through a range of options ranging from institutional training offered at a greater frequency to smaller, "pop-up" training sessions held immediately or on short notice.

Length of time allowed for learners to register.

A Few Days	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks
22.6%	25.3%	25.8%	6.0%	9.2%	11.1%
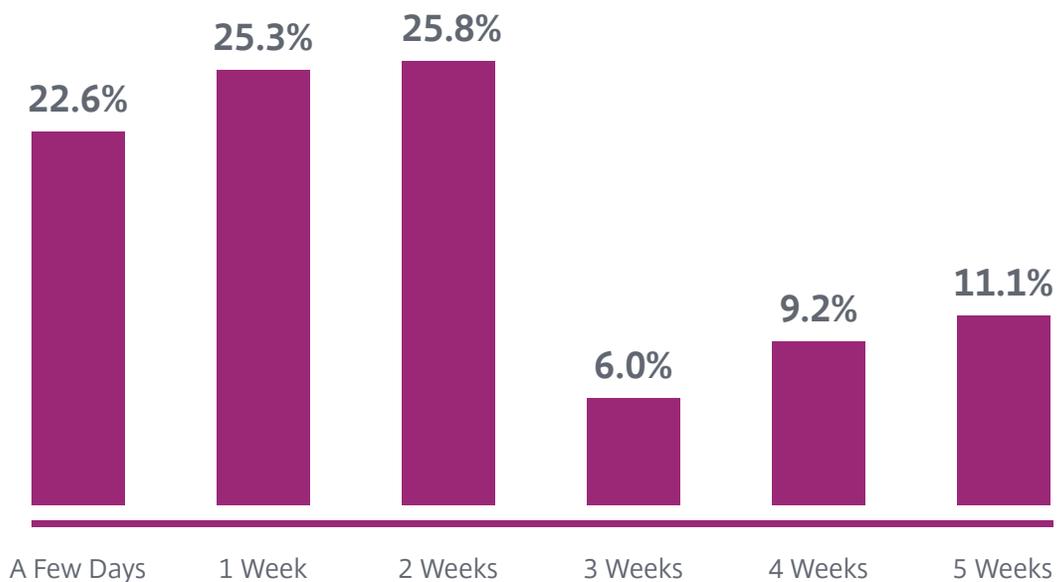
> ❝ In nearly one in four cases, students sign up for training less than a week in advance. ❞

In more than half (51.1%) of HILT and VILT training sessions, learners are given between one and two weeks of advance notice to register.

In nearly one in four cases (22.5%), students are given less than one week's notice.

Training Session Execution

The delivery of training involves a substantial organizational commitment, including the resources allocated to the preparation, delivery and assessment of the material, but also the organizational resources represented as employees take time away from their other responsibilities to focus on learning. Technology-enabled learning is a key differentiator in reducing employee time off task and the associated productivity cost.

Instructional Support

In today's technology-enabled training department, although most training professionals support multiple facets of the training function, training professionals are typically supported by internal staff during the delivery of live training.

The number of internal staff members who support training professionals in the execution of a technology-enabled live training session is variable. However, typically, trainers who are able to specialize (in that they are responsible for fewer facets of the training process) have larger numbers of behind-the-scenes staff supporting the live training event.

It is noteworthy that training professionals responsible for all three main activity areas of virtual or hybrid live instructor-led training sessions—that is, the trainers who wear the most hats—are also the most likely to have the support of just one other staff member during the live session.

> " Nearly 60% of trainers are assisted by one or fewer internal staff, and about 38% are supported by two or more staff during the delivery of live technology-enabled training. "
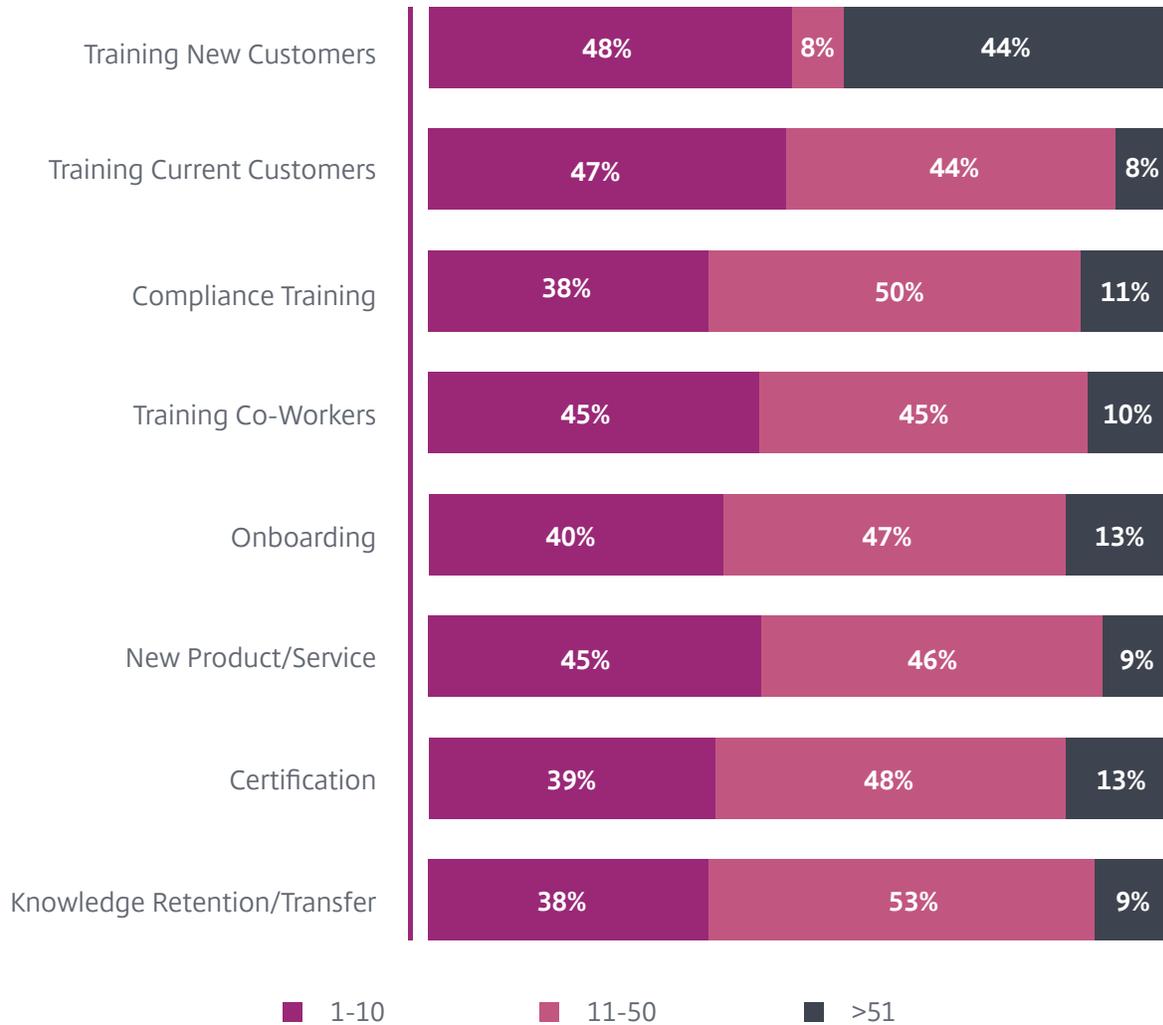
Behind-the-scenes staff support for training.

	One Area	Two Areas	Three Areas
1 or Fewer	12.5%	23.5%	59.6%
2 or More	32.9%	28.2%	31.8%
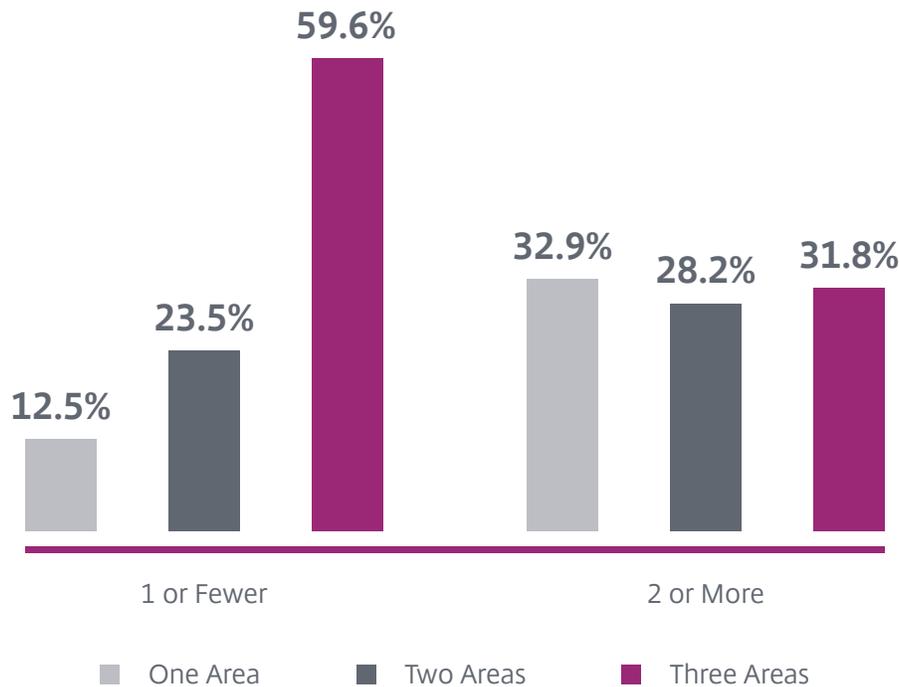
Class Sizes

Class sizes for technology-enabled training tend to be limited, most commonly smaller than 10 learners, with most classes smaller than 25 learners.

Typical HILT/VILT class sizes by type of instruction.

|	1-10	11-50	>51
Training New Customers	48%	8%	44%
Training Current Customers	47%	44%	8%
Compliance Training	38%	50%	11%
Training Co-Workers	45%	45%	10%
Onboarding	40%	47%	13%
New Product/Service	45%	46%	9%
Certification	39%	48%	13%
Knowledge Retention/Transfer	38%	53%	9%

■ 1-10   ■ 11-50   ■ >51

These sizes vary according to the type of training conducted. For example, customer training sessions tend to be smaller than 10 learners, while sessions intended to support knowledge retention are typically larger, with more than half offered to groups between 11 and 50 students.

Activities, Tools and Features

In technology-enabled training, the most commonly-used feature is chat (55.2%).

Commonly-used HILT/VILT features.
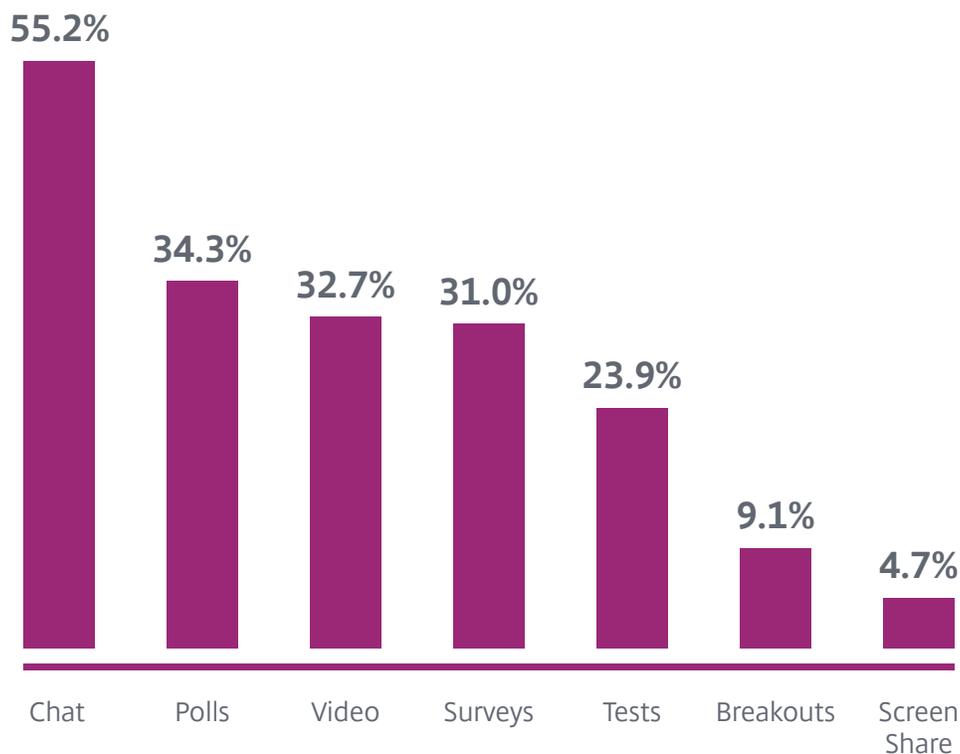
> **" Features supporting student engagement are frequently used, including chat and polls. "**
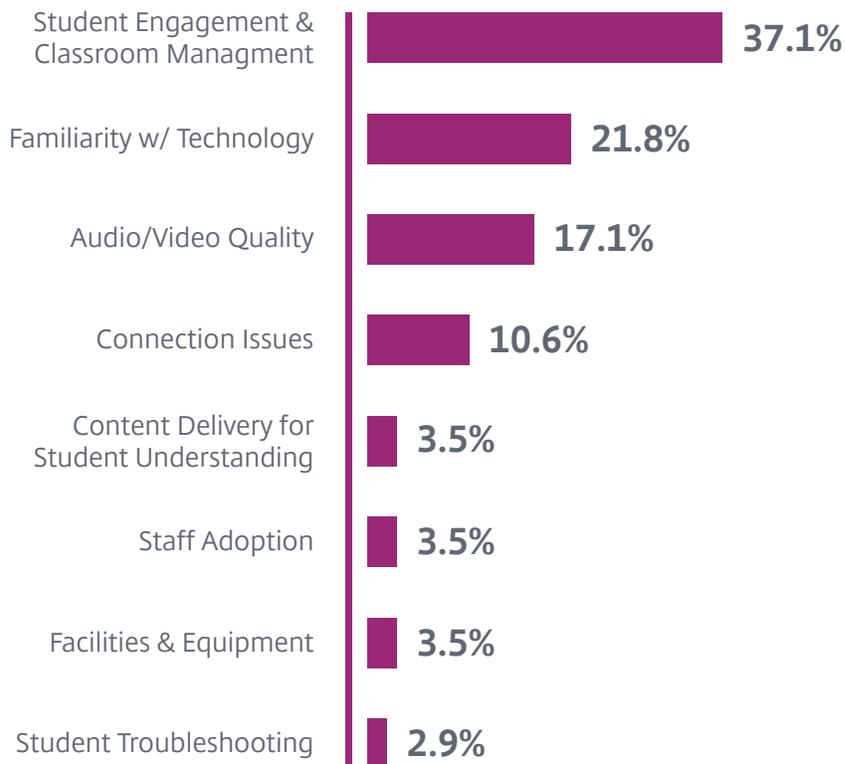
Polls, surveys and show of hands, when viewed together, are used even more frequently (65.3%). These interactivity features are closely followed by video, which while used with increasing frequency in HILT/VILT, is still a less commonly-used feature (32.7%).

The tools used most frequently are those that contribute to the conduct of the class and to student learning. Chat enhances learning while minimizing disruption. Polls support student engagement and provide the instructor with instant feedback from students, as do show of hands and surveys. Breakouts are used more frequently as class sizes increase.

Challenges Delivering

Most GoToTraining users surveyed did not cite specific challenges encountered during training sessions.

Challenges encountered during training sessions.

Category	Percentage
Student Engagement & Classroom Managment	37.1%
Familiarity w/ Technology	21.8%
Audio/Video Quality	17.1%
Connection Issues	10.6%
Content Delivery for Student Understanding	3.5%
Staff Adoption	3.5%
Facilities & Equipment	3.5%
Student Troubleshooting	2.9%

Those who did cite issues with HILT/VILT cited student engagement as the leading challenge (37.1%). Technology obstacles were also present, including the trainer's familiarity with the tool (21.8%), audio or video quality (17.1%) and connection speed issues (10.6%), followed by less frequent issues concerning institutional support and adoption, including staff reluctance and physical facilities issues.

Since most VILT/HILT training professionals do not hire third-party technical support (these services are hired in just 1.6% of cases), the support, training and help structure provided by the learning platform vendor becomes a critical driver of training success.

Video is increasingly used within HILT/VILT training to provide engaging and easy-to-understand content, driven by the increasing ease and decreasing cost of video creation. Video increasingly provides a means to demonstrate scenarios, features or products to learners.

> " In technology-supported training, like classroom training, the top challenge is student engagement. "

Technical Support

Most rely on internal support and the support provided by the HILT/VILT vendor; most do not rely on technical support provided by third parties.
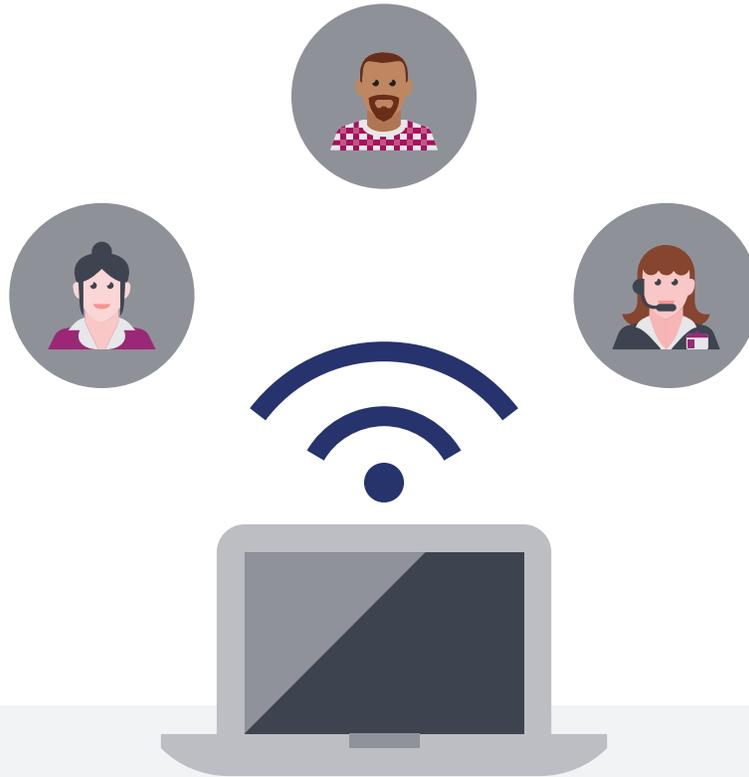
Since trainers are broadly responsible for many or all of the tasks involved in the scheduling, promotion, creation, delivery and measurement of training programs, their ability to perform is enabled by how easy (or difficult) their selected technology solutions are to use. Their success, especially for trainers who operate in small teams or as individuals, depends on the support provided by the technology vendor, combined with how readily the tool can be learned by both the trainer and student.

Post-Training Activities

Considering the organization's investment in training, it would be short-sighted for any organization to overlook the next steps, including the reinforcement of learning and measurement of outcomes. Best practices in the delivery of training include the integration of evaluative activities at all levels of the Kirkpatrick training evaluation model, particularly higher-level evaluation focused on learner behavior and results.
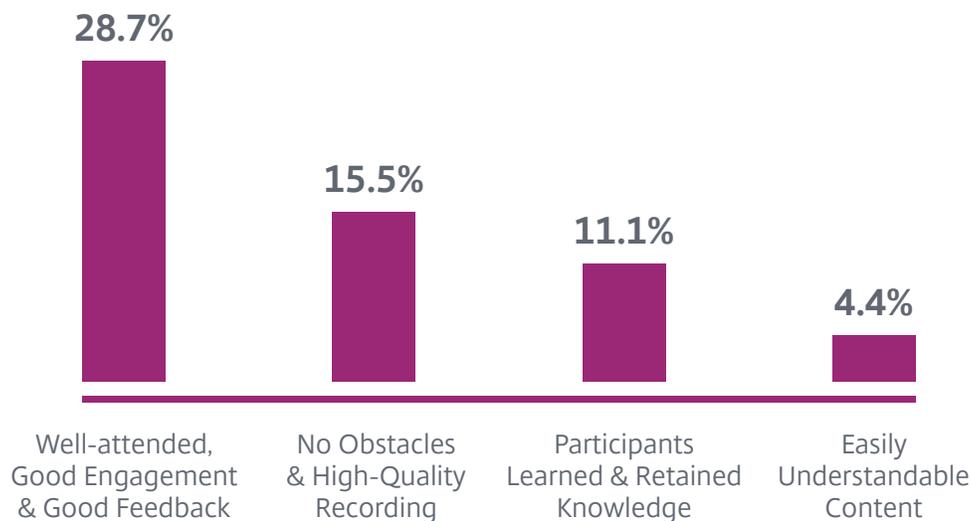
Assessment

In technology-enabled training, the trainer's measures of success are broadly similar to those found in traditional classroom training, where the trainer's primary success metrics focus on the learner's understanding, retention and application of the material.

The Kirkpatrick Model defines the four levels of training evaluation:

1. The reaction of the student and their thoughts about the learning experience.

2. The student's increase in knowledge from the training experience.

3. The student's behavioral change and improvement after applying the skills on the job.

4. The results or effects the student's performance has on the business.

Trainers are also concerned with their ability to conduct the training session without distraction from the supporting technology (15.5%).

Measures of HILT/VILT success.

Category	Percentage
Well-attended, Good Engagement & Good Feedback	28.7%
No Obstacles & High-Quality Recording	15.5%
Participants Learned & Retained Knowledge	11.1%
Easily Understandable Content	4.4%

Outcomes

Organizational outcomes in technology-enabled instructor-led training are directly driven by learner outcomes. Among GoToTraining users, 85 percent found their company's overall productivity improved through the use of the GoToTraining tool.

The **Top Three** training process and learner outcomes associated with GoToTraining use were:

1. Engagement of learners through virtual tools & activities

2. The ability to scale training to reach more students in less time

3. Simplification and expediting of training scheduling & registration

Compared against traditional face-to-face or classroom-style training, VILT is substantially less costly. Cost modeling of VILT against classroom sessions finds VILT saves between $9,550 and $15,870 per training session in direct and indirect costs - accounting for technology, travel and transportation costs, as well as the organizational costs of employee time off task.

The cost differences are greatest for employee populations across multiple work sites, where more travel is required, and for mid-level and senior-level staff, where the opportunity cost of time off task is greatest. However, even for populations on one work site, where no travel is required, the cost savings of VILT represent effective savings of $1,910 to $2,535 per training session.

> 66 **Companies can save between $9,550 to $15,870 by moving one course from a traditional classroom to VILT.** 99

Conclusion

Key Takeaways

Virtual instructor-led training is demonstrably less expensive than **traditional face-to-face training**.

The top driver of training effectiveness is **content preparation** and its **adaption to the mode of delivery**.

Technology-enabled training users find **significant increases** in **organizational efficiency**.

Trainers who **wear the most hats** tend to **have the least internal staff support**, and no third-party content development help.

Planning for success demands **advance planning of post-session evaluation** and reinforcement.

Trainer and learner **ease of use** and **ease of adoption** are supported by careful user interface design.

Most technology-enabled instructor-led **classes are small**, some with fewer than 10 students.

Trainers use technology to **quickly develop and deploy training**, sometimes just days in advance.

The challenges of a virtual or hybrid class are **engagement and delivery of content for understanding**—the same as a traditional class.

Video content is more frequently used to improve learning as it becomes less expensive to produce and share.

Help provided by the technology provider **is critical**, as most training organizations otherwise don't access third-party support.

Turn-key tool availability helps overcome **scheduling and learner availability** challenges.

How to Use This Report

The observations in this report are based on industry research conducted by Training Industry, Inc., and customer survey data compiled by Citrix Systems, Inc., of users of the GoToTraining platform. The report is intended to support the decisions of the training professional and to help training management set appropriate expectations and to make informed decisions about training resources and expected outcomes. Most of all, this report is intended to support a conversation within your organization about effective training structures, approaches and programs that will benefit your employees, customers and company.

Data sources.

> Citrix Systems, Inc., 2015, GoToTraining user survey. Certain qualitative data were recoded for reporting purposes by Training Industry, Inc. analysts.
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> TechValidate research of GoToTraining users for Citrix Systems, Inc., 2015.
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> Donald L. Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., 1994, "Evaluating Training Programs."