

Enabling Virtual Learning Content for External Partners

Onboarding programs can help build lasting relationships with partners and support future efforts to retain beneficial partnerships.

Internal employees are not the only individuals who need to be brought up to speed and trained on company practices and procedures. Onboarding is an effective way to acclimate external partners to the organization, providing a baseline of information to immerse them in the company culture and build company knowledge.

Onboarding new employees is the most common use case of enabling virtual learning content in companies. There are a number of similarities in the content and purpose of orienting both new and acquired employees, as these audiences often need the same information to socialize them into the larger organization.

Virtual training can increase the efficiency and ease of disseminating information to potential vendors, while enriching the partnership experience. According to research findings, 52 percent of companies were rated very or somewhat effective at implementing

learning content enablement (LCE) for onboarding external partners, whereas 16 percent were rated very or somewhat ineffective.

Building a virtual training program for external partners requires organizations to align business goals with training objectives to ensure newcomers receive the right information. When the target audience is channel partners or external contractors, the training topics frequently implemented contrast with those for an internal onboarding audience. For example, organizational culture and structure were identified as priority onboarding topics for both internal and acquired employees, compliance and role definitions/expectations were the biggest priorities for an external audience [see Figure 1].

Considering the descending order in which these topics were cumulatively endorsed, it is apparent that onboarding individuals external to the organization

Figure 1. External Onboarding Topics

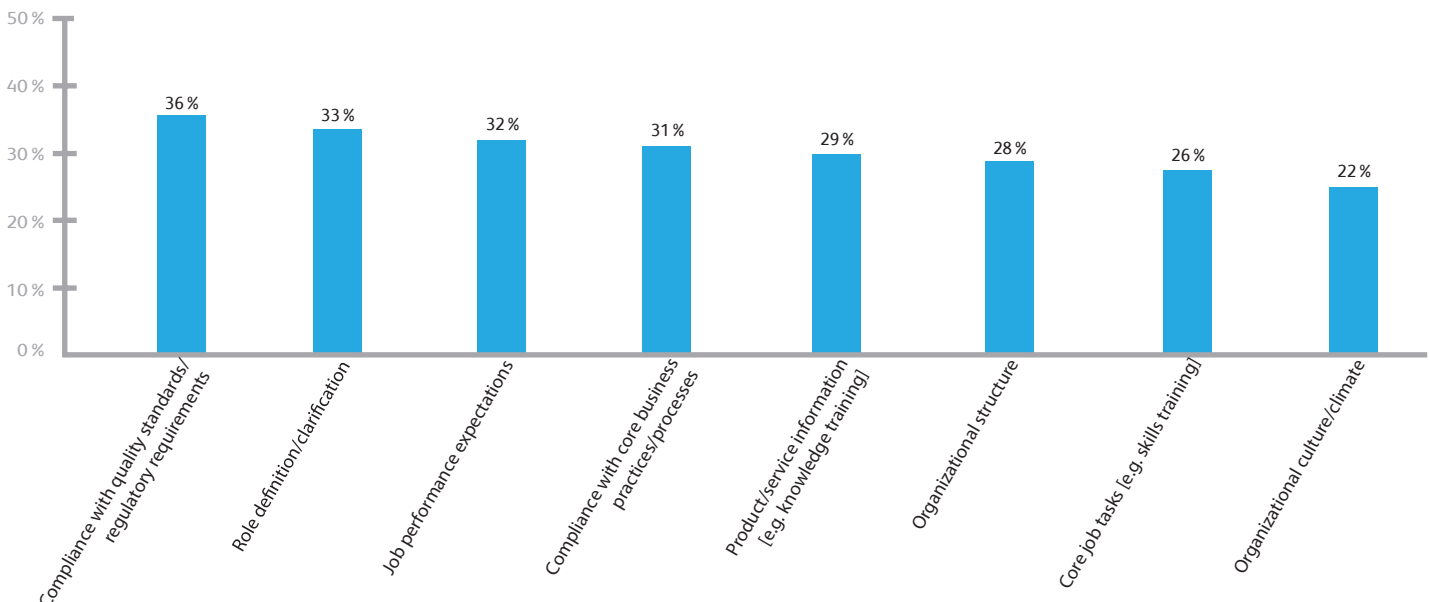
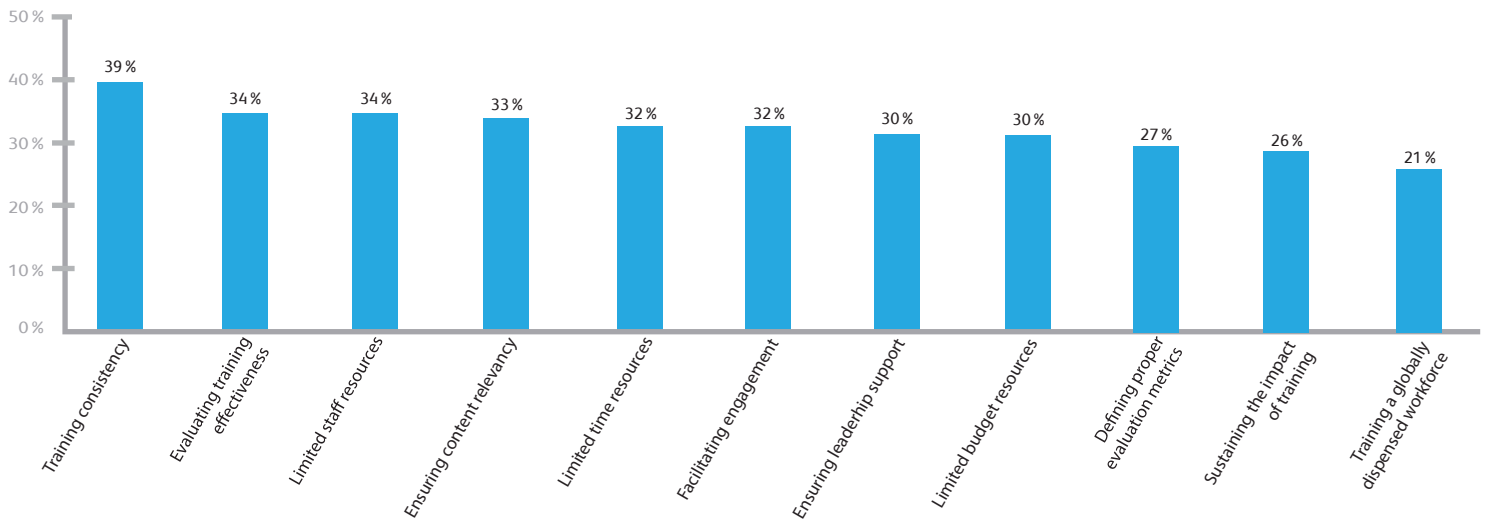


Figure 2. Challenges to Onboarding External Partners



carries a different set of priorities compared to an internal LCE audience. However, it should not be overlooked that all of the topics were endorsed, suggesting most companies that onboard external partners or contractors often use some combination of the listed topic areas to socialize and inform those individuals.

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Best Practice

Virtual learning technologies must be easy to use to ensure a positive user experience.

Implementation Challenges

When tasked with creating a training program, it's important to reframe the conversation to explore and analyze the need before recommending a solution and delivery method. A training strategy must be fully

developed before implementing any training program, which includes aligning business goals with training objectives, selecting the appropriate delivery method, ensuring relevancy and consistency of content, and measuring the learning impact.

Though the topics may differ between onboarding internal employees and external partners, the implementation challenges are largely identical. As shown in Figure 2, the most common obstacles to onboarding external partners were training consistency, feedback on training effectiveness, and resource shortages. A notable finding in Figure 2 is that ensuring the relevancy of training content was identified as a challenge by 33 percent of companies—which was the same result for onboarding internal employees.

Effective LCE programs can function as the cornerstone to building lasting relationships with partners, and in doing so can support future efforts to retain beneficial partnerships. By developing an effective training strategy, organizations can overcome potential obstacles and support the training needs of external partners.

For more information, read the full research report on [“Enabling Virtual Learning Content for Employees, Partners and Customers.”](#)