

Transform training into a strategic advantage with online meetings

Four proven tips for boosting your training effectiveness

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Accomplish more with the resources you already have to give your business a strategic advantage. That's the strategy for leading companies who use online meetings to optimize their training operations and increase productivity.

It's all about sharing and growing ideas online—wherever and whenever training is needed most.

Many factors—new hires, new customers, product upgrades, and new distribution channels—increase the demand for training, so cutbacks aren't an option. Online training makes it easier for companies to fulfill this demand—without adding to existing resources, creating delays, or forcing impractical upfront investments. It also reduces travel and training center costs, ensuring product adoption, enabling customization, invigorating the distribution channel, and opening the potential for new revenue streams.

Consider four proven ways you can capitalize on the benefits of web tools and eLearning to make your training more efficient and cost-effective.

1. Ensure product adoption at a low cost.

Seasoned business people know that training new customers to use products or services successfully from the start is an opportunity to gain strategic advantage. Customers get frustrated easily when struggling to understand how a product works on their own. They may even begin to doubt whether it's worth the trouble, and eventually abandon the process altogether.

Without online training, expenses pile up and profits erode because training requires in-person participation in a live classroom. In addition, class size is constrained by reasonable drive times, so training more customers involves investing in more training centers. Traveling to customer sites is expensive and time-consuming for trainers and can curtail the time spent actually doing the training. And scaling training quickly enough to support growth is virtually impossible.

Integrate online sessions into your training mix to significantly reduce—or even eliminate—travel. Get all the resources of an in-person classroom—including registration and headcount tracking, hands-on labs, breakout rooms, complete presentation and demonstration capabilities, testing, and grading. Plus, there are no training center expenses and minimal business disruptions for customers or trainers.

The low cost of online meetings makes it easy to repeat a training session for those who didn't understand it the first time, missed the session, or have more questions once they gain some experience with the product.

Forward-looking companies use online meetings to ensure customers understand the full functionality of products or the range of offered services from the start, so they can successfully incorporate them into business processes. Changing these processes can be painful, especially when the employees who have to alter their behavior don't understand why it would be an improvement. But when those same employees can envision the benefits of the outcome, they quickly become proponents of the solution's adoption in the organization.

Use online training to ensure customer success and adoption. It's a low-risk proposition that enables companies to gain a strategic advantage.

“WebEx training has made our customers more savvy on our solutions so they depend less on our support department. But whenever there is a customer support issue, we resolve it quickly with WebEx.”

— Sheila O'Kane, Administrative Manager of Client Education Services, Compulink

“We had developed these short, topic-oriented trainings several years ago but were only presenting them onsite at a handful of customer locations. With WebEx, it was easy to deliver the same sessions online, more frequently, and to a larger audience.”

— Kit Elert, Director of Training,
Elert & Associates

2. Provide customized training and keep costs down.

Experienced business trainers know that finding a training template that works for every customer in every situation is nearly impossible. Almost every customer needs at least some training customization because of the people they employ, their degree of geographic concentration, the way they'll be using the product, or their particular business objectives.

Without online training, customization is time-consuming and labor-intensive. In the best-case scenario, customization only requires re-arranging existing material. However, changing training session scheduling and staffing is usually unavoidable. In the worst case scenario, customization requires re-designing from the ground up, which cuts into or eliminates profits.

Online training makes it possible to offer the same training in different ways. Instead of one day-long training session, shorter 45-minute modules can be created from the same course material so employees can get the same information over time. These sessions can be delivered to groups or to individuals from the convenience of their desks. By breaking the training into half-day sessions, an entire department can train at the same time, while still being able to attend to emergencies and keep ongoing business tasks moving. Training can also be customized for “one-to-one” and “one-to-many” situations by making it available in real-time to large or small groups in different locations and repeated frequently from recorded sessions. Many companies find that online meetings easily increase the frequency of training sessions without adding resources or increasing costs.

Refresher training is also a great way to alleviate frustration by posting recorded sessions online. Customers can even reuse content for fast, easy new hire training. Many find that charging additional fees for making training continuously available is acceptable to customers and provides a previously unavailable revenue stream. It also enables a new level of customization that quickly pays for itself by amortizing the costs of the customization across the customer's entire staff and, potentially, new customers with a similar need.

3. Expand the reach of existing resources.

The need for ongoing training often restricts the geographic reach of businesses, especially those with limited resources. These organizations are forced to limit their prospecting to local targets—leaving a lot of potential business opportunities untapped or open to competitors.

Before online training, the travel and training center costs associated with broadening the geography were prohibitive. Using online training, you can conduct more training sessions more often—around the globe. You can eliminate travel and training center costs and reach a wider audience by training multiple customers' employees at once, regardless of location.

Trainers can interact with even the most remote customers by using the whiteboard to get them working together to solve a problem or by in-session polling for an impromptu quiz. Virtual hand-raising enables customers to ask questions and vote on the right answers, increasing their attentiveness and their ability to learn collaboratively. The sessions can be recorded so customers can access them at any time as a review, and those who missed the session can still keep up with the rest of the trainees.

“It would've been simply impossible to reach this many people through on-site visits alone. WebEx has really helped us broaden our visibility and our impact, no question.”

— Barbara Thompson, Training Manager,
USA Funds

“With WebEx, we introduced new products and features to our resellers more rapidly, which enables them to deliver our services to the market faster.”

— Dave Kurlan, Founder and CEO,
Objective Management Group

4. Invigorate the distribution channel.

Building and training the reseller and channel-partner network is critical for growing businesses. A positive endorsement from resellers or channel partners is highly valuable, since they have the direct end-customer connection.

Without online training, opportunities to keep the channel partners up-to-speed and motivated are limited. Periodic get-togethers at golf courses or vacation-type locations are useful and an important incentive, but they're often out of sync with product innovations or introductions, subject to waning interest as time passes, and unable to garner important feedback with actionable frequency.

Use online training to get your resellers up to speed on your products and features quickly and get your services to market faster. Channel partners are more likely to sell and support products and services they feel confident about, and less likely to favor your competitors.

Ultimately, online training also helps your channel maintain enthusiasm and sell more effectively--another strategic advantage.

Share and grow your ideas with Cisco WebEx training solutions

Pass along your best ideas with WebEx® online collaboration solutions. Tap into a unique set of training capabilities to reduce training costs, ensure product adoption, increase reach, keep channel partners motivated, and generate new revenue streams. Join the thousands of growing businesses who count on leading Cisco WebEx™ solutions for web meetings and on-demand collaboration. Try an online demo today.

Join these customers who use Cisco WebEx solutions to meet their growing sales needs:

- Compulink
- Elert and Associates
- Objective Management Group
- USA Funds

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