2020

CONTENT PERSONALIZATION AT SCALE:

Why **Content Strategy** and **Technology** are Critical to Success

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Overview

For years, organizations researched, explored and discussed transforming content to a more learner-centric, multi-modal, personalized environment. But the actual transition has been arduously slow.

Although the workforce has grown increasingly mobile, remote and dispersed, most learning organizations continue to focus on in-person, instructor-led training. Of course, 2020 and the onset of a global pandemic upended everyone's perception of "business as usual" and kicked all of these trends into overdrive. Organizations that primarily relied upon in-person, event-based learning had to adapt quickly to a new model. Those that hadn't even considered working from home now managed an almost entirely remote workforce while recognizing that their existing technology infrastructure was lacking. However, many organizations quickly realized that identifying and implementing new technology solutions and strategies that provide learners with a wider range of options and organizations wit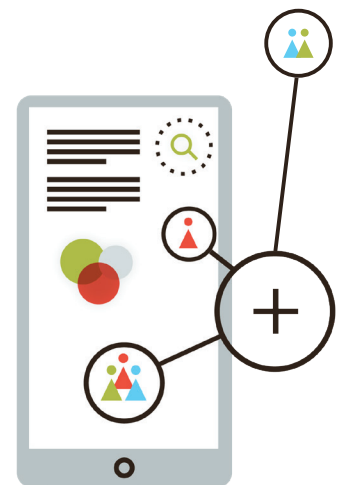h more flexibility would not simply be a short-term fix. They can provide long-term benefits beyond the immediate need, helping organizations deliver better, more impactful learning in any business environment.

Companies are now completely rethinking and re-engineering their learning content strategies, realizing that a much wider set of delivery channels is needed to meet a rapidly evolving set of user expectations. Learners expect the technology and content associated with learning to behave the way technology and information behave in their everyday lives. They want personalization, context and relevance, and they want it immediately.

Old models cannot deliver this sort of learning experience at scale — the frameworks, content formats and modalities companies use are not designed to do this. And while organizations recognize the importance of a strong and engaging learner experience, many struggle because their content strategy has not kept pace and they do not have the technology to deliver on their promises.

> *Fewer than 10% of companies in Brandon Hall Group's Learning Strategy Survey state that their learning environment "takes advantage of multiple technologies to create engaging, personalized learning experiences."*

However, the right content strategy paired with the right technology makes it not only possible, but sustainable for organizations to deliver personalized learning experiences to diverse global audiences. By first understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach is unsustainable in today's business environment, companies can develop a content strategy centered on personalization and agility. Organizations must tackle the problem at the molecular level of learning content and leverage technology to increase three key areas for learning:

ACCESS **SPEED** **RELEVANCY**
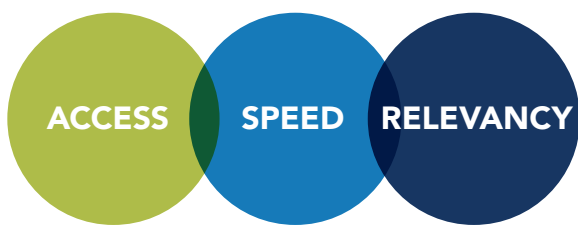
These concepts are the key to creating personalized, engaging and impactful learning experiences that meet learners at the point of performance and drive business outcomes.

ACCESS

Ultimately, personalized learning is about providing access to the right information, at the right time, in the right format and on the right device or platform, so content strategy is only half of the equation; an effective distribution strategy is equally critical to successful personalization at scale. In an environment where people connect to resources weekly, daily or even multiple times a day, a static, event-based content strategy will not suffice. People have become accustomed to quickly finding information and answering questions via platforms such as Google and YouTube, and learning must adapt to provide similar experiences. This means organizations must expand delivery channels to ensure content can be distributed virtually anywhere, with integration in multiple tools and platforms, either publicly or privately, to support the extended enterprise fully.

How often would you expect your individual contributor population, on average, to need to connect with learning resources to perform their job effectively?
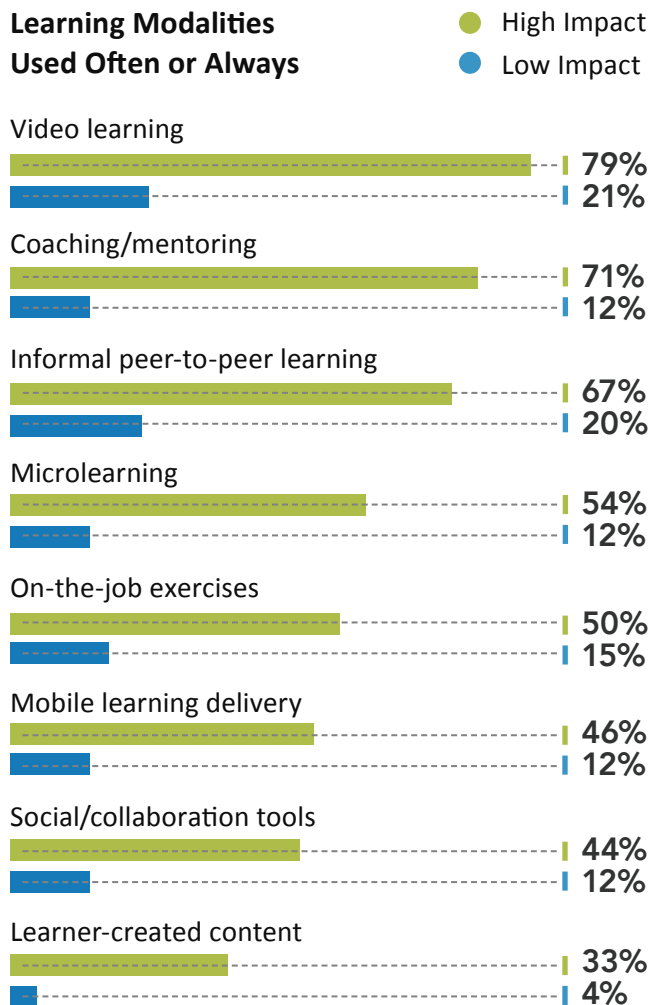
64%

Weekly, daily or more often

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group Learning Strategy Study

Companies creating and delivering content that fits seamlessly into the flow of work, whether through chatbots, web portals, LMSs, LXPs, embedded in external applications or anywhere else it needs to be, achieve better results than those that do not. Brandon Hall Group's Learner Experience Survey found that companies with "High Impact" learning programs were more likely to use a wider variety of modalities. These organizations report their learning has a strong positive impact on outcomes such as time to productivity, individual performance and employee engagement.

Learning Modalities Used Often or Always

- ● High Impact
- ● Low Impact

Video learning
79%
21%

Coaching/mentoring
71%
12%

Informal peer-to-peer learning
67%
20%

Microlearning
54%
12%

On-the-job exercises
50%
15%

Mobile learning delivery
46%
12%

Social/collaboration tools
44%
12%

Learner-created content
33%
4%

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group
Learner Experience Study

But as organizations continue to expand the scope of their content across additional modalities and tools, their content strategy must evolve to address the exponential increase in the volume of outputs and deliverables that will need to be maintained. And the learning function will have to figure out how to do all of this at the speed of the business.

SPEED

Now, more than ever, organizations try to reconcile the need for diverse learning experiences with their desire to roll out programs quickly enough to address pressing business concerns. Sixty percent of companies say that creating learning content in a timely fashion is an important/critical people function during the post-pandemic transition, and 44% don't believe they have the technology to get it done.

60%

Say creating learning content in a timely fashion is an important/critical people function during the post-pandemic transition

44%

Believe better technology will help them create learning content in a timely fashion

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group Transitioning to the New Realities of the COVID-19 Experience

Workplace experts predict we will continue to see more remote work and less in-person instruction than before, and not just in the short term. This move to a more multimodal approach should be viewed as a long-term strategy and not simply a band-aid for temporary restrictions to the traditional workplace environment. In the future, content strategy must reflect learners' expectations of personalized content experience and organizations must seek the technology tools that will enable them to execute that strategy.

RELEVANCE

Finally — and arguably most importantly — content must be relevant to the learners. They need to know what is in it if for them. They want to understand how the content relates to them and their roles, and how it will help them do their job better, for their own performance and to benefit the organization.

When companies think about relevance and personalization for learning, it's important to focus on three key areas:

1 Providing learning experiences based on the employee's professional needs, experience and role.

2 Making it easy for audiences to access learning in a language, format, platform and timeframe best for each individual employee.

3 Making content accessible within the applications employees use every day.

Tailoring content based on an employee's professional needs, experience or role is the biggest challenge to delivering personalized learning at scale. Creating an engaging and

effective series of content is one thing, but personalizing that content for each unique audience (based on language, region, role, experience level and other factors) is all but impossible without leveraging technology designed to manage and track content at the component level. It's the time and effort required for creating, customizing, maintaining and recreating these individual deliverables that prevent more organizations from personalizing their content. And the problem gets exponentially worse as organizations become larger and more dispersed. However, "High Performing" organizations are more likely to use personalization than other companies.

Organizations Including Personalized Learning In Their Learning Strategy

62% High Performers

35% Others
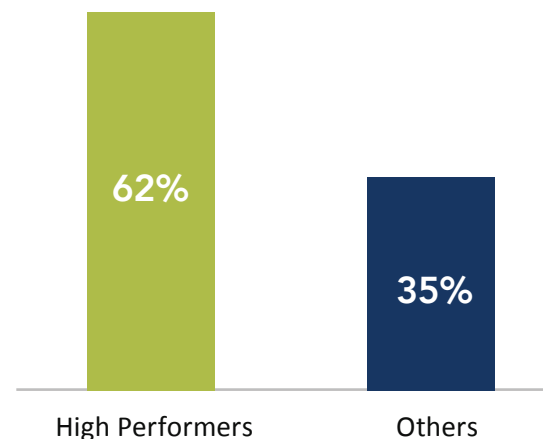
Source: Brandon Hall Group Personalized Learning Study

However, content creation is only the beginning. The ability to push relevant content directly to employees in the applications they use every day is vital to successful personalization, and extremely difficult and time-consuming without the aid of technology.

Getting It Done

A content strategy that focuses on access, speed and relevance requires the right technology to be successful.

Reliance on SharePoint drives and desktop authoring tools greatly impedes speed and relevance, as it becomes increasingly difficult to recreate and contextualize content personalized for individual audiences. These tools make it difficult to find already-available content, which leads to a lot of duplication of effort. Even if the content is discoverable, it must still be recreated for each audience.

Rapid authoring tools can ease the speed issue, but they limit their outputs to the format in which they were created. And with personalization, they still require each deliverable to be uniquely built and customized.

A Learning Content Management System (LCMS), however, can help organizations address all three principles. LCMSs make it easy for organizations to break content down to its elemental building blocks and efficiently reuse those blocks thanks to intelligent linking, not copying and pasting. With this technology, unique, personalized deliverables can be assembled and reassembled with as many existing content "building blocks" as necessary, adding contextual personalization throughout, while keeping core content consistent. This level of flexibility can only be achieved by breaking from traditional what-you-see-is-what-you-get authoring model and allowing content to standalone — independent of design — until it is published. Moving the decision on how content is ultimately formatted and delivered (print, web, chat) from authoring and downstream to publishing provides a powerful level of flexibility and avoids locking content into a format that works today but may be obsolete tomorrow.

Whether it's switching from in-person to online content delivery during a pandemic or pivoting to respond to new market realities, organizations using an LCMS can quickly and efficiently adapt their existing content to meet additional needs and address challenges as they arise.

Xyleme LCMS

ON-DEMAND & KNOWLEDGE SEARCHING

CONTEXTUAL HELP & AR/VR SUPPORT

LEARNING LIBRARIES & RESOURCES

PRINTED MATERIAL

Source: Xyleme

Reusing content with intelligent linking, instead of copying and pasting, tremendously reduces development time. And this platform makes each content component easy to discover and use, so authors needn't recreate content that already exists. When content requires an update, they can do once it and propagate it to every place that component exists, rather than needing to find and rework every single piece of content where it exists.

In terms of access, an LCMS not only allows authors to assemble content for any modality, it also means organizations are prepared for technologies yet to come. Content created with other tools will always live in their specific, limited format. Because content "building blocks" in an LCMS use flexible XML, they can be exported easily into new formats as needed, without having to start from scratch.

Consider how much learning content was developed in Flash format; what happens to it when a tool or file format becomes obsolete? With an LCMS, content isn't tied to a specific format or output type, ensuring it can be used effectively across all the platforms and channels organizations now use and new ones they may engage in the future.

A modern LCMS that supports authoring and distribution is vital to the success of a content strategy focused on supporting an agile learning function with relevant, accessible content that can be efficiently created, personalized, reused, managed, delivered and maintained at scale.

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About Xyleme

Founded in 2004, Xyleme's award-winning content management solutions provide a single source of truth, centralizing the entire content lifecycle and empowering organizations to create compelling, dynamic, reusable learning content, personalize it to scale, maintain it efficiently, deliver it anywhere and measure its impact.

Visit xyleme.com to learn more

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