
The Revolution in eLearning

When Trainers take Control and Learners Really Learn



By

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eLearning has two related strategic problems that will require a revolution to change:

- First tragic mistake of the eLearning industry is that “It is a training industry that has eliminated the trainer!” Tens of thousands of expert trainers who develop and deliver excellent learning programs have been excluded from eLearning because of the costs, methods and corporate ‘silo’ battles involved in developing an eLearning program. Many eLearning companies have even avoided trainers as a content channel partners because they are not media developers, and partnering with trainers does not fit into the VCs’ business model. Of course, the workaround for trainers is video ‘talking heads’ streamed out in online seminars. But does this training really change anyone?
- Second is that ineffective eLearning uses the same techniques that poor stand-up learning uses, ‘preach’ and ‘test’. Few learners remember anything past the test date and little change, if any, happens.

“I remember grumbling about this with fellow analysts six years ago. And that someone will come along and re-invent this technology to fit the trainer’s and learner’s experience. That the whole custom eLearning industry would be placed back into the hands of trainers. Well, six years later a Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology, Dr. Diane Kramer, managed to do just that by developing an advanced learning method for eLearning course development combined with an easy-to-use technology for trainers.”...*Richard Close*

Shaking the Tree

Three years ago a group of learning experts teamed up at PeakSkills Learning Systems to completely re-invent eLearning from the standpoint of the trainer and the learner. The goal was to develop a transformational eLearning method and a breakthrough eLearning technology that would bring the learning expertise of the trainer into the eLearning world while improving the learning quality of eLearning programs. To reach this goal, several difficult strategic criteria had to be satisfied:

Trainer Control. The trainer must have total control of the course content, student experience, registration and community communication without dilution of the learning experience by programmers or administrators. Teachers have this control of the ‘bricks’ classrooms. They should have this control over the ‘clicks’ classrooms.

Learning-driven Authoring. eLearning course design, eLearning Authoring and the entire learning experience must result in breakthrough learning that leads to performance change. To accomplish this criteria, it was decided that:

eLearning design and development must be driven by transformational learning.

Transformational learning is learning that improves long-term performance through facilitating behavior change as well as enhancing complex decision-making, problem-solving and the generalization of learning in novel situations. (Transformational learning is based on the psychological processes underlying human learning and cognition. It’s principles are drawn from research in the fields of Cognitive Psychology, Educational Psychology and the Neuro-sciences, as well as ‘best learning practices’ from the fields of Accelerated Learning and Neuro-Linguistic Programming.)

The eLearning authoring must dovetail with the learning methods to drive a deeper transformational state.

Authoring must be a part of the Learning Management System so changes can be made on demand and during the course.

User Ease. Management, eLearning course design, and authoring must be extremely intuitive and easy for the trainer. Better yet, the trainer must see the methodology and technology and fall in love with it.

Efficient. Learning to use the eLearning system and the eLearning methods must be grasped in a few days while the trainees are building a real course.

Comprehensive. The eLearning capabilities of the trainer must include full-featured 'blended' (part classroom or virtual classroom/part self-paced) learning.

Interactive, Deep and Engaging. Courses must reach deep into the mind of the learner and transform behavior using advanced learning and change processes.

Economical. Economic criteria include two levels - getting started as a trainer and getting started as an organization:

Trainers must have an affordable eLearning system to work on and the training required to become proficient.

Small to medium size companies must have a low-risk way to build and work with eLearning technology and then go into production.

Achieving these goals was a daunting task. We had to develop an eLearning Platform (included administration, authoring, instructor and learner areas) from scratch around the trainers' needs while weaving transformational learning practices like Accelerated Learning and NLP into a learning methodology and authoring system, all the while making it so easy to use that anyone with good PowerPoint skills could succeed. The work paid off and the first eLearning channels of corporate and independent training professionals are building some very new and exciting content.

This White Paper - "The Revolution in eLearning: When Trainers Take Control and Learners Really Learn" reviews the logic of PeakSkills revolutionary new eLearning method and system. Additional copies at: www.peakskillslearning.com.

If you are a corporate or private trainer or content developer, PeakSkills Learning Systems provides a three-day stand-up course for trainers and developers on the PeakSkills Learning Method and the PeakSkills eLearning Platform (distance learning version now available). We also let students play with online courses for six months to demonstrate their capabilities to their clients and organizations.

Sincerely,

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The Revolution in eLearning – The Beginnings

Importance of Learning in Our Culture

Why don't more people work more efficiently? Why is it so hard to figure out how to get many products to operate? And why is it so difficult to understand a company's service offerings? Unanswerable questions? Or are they?

Learning – about our work, our selves and about products and services available to us – suddenly has sharply risen in importance as a business topic. Given the complexity of our modern economy, we all need to learn at an accelerated pace to be effective at our work. And to make excellent decisions as consumers, we need to learn about products and services daily.

It is not about classroom vs. eLearning vs. blended learning.
It is about great learning methods verses dreadful ones.

In the 90s, to close the 'learning' gap, corporations started putting more and more resources into providing stand-up training programs to employees, partners and consumers. That solved the 'learning' problem, right? Unfortunately, wrong!

The high cost of training programs in terms of time, resources and money became too burdensome for many companies. Those responsible for closing the 'learning gap' had to find another way to make an impact.

Trying another 'learning' approach, companies turned to the web and launched 'traditional' eLearning programs. Costs came down in terms of time and money. That solved the 'learning' problem, right? Unfortunately no again!

How 'Traditional' eLearning Came About

'Traditional' eLearning was developed neither from research on learners or from feedback of trainers. Instead 'traditional' eLearning began when the largest corporations needed online registration systems to track enrollment and results of classroom training. Techies were the originators! When the largest corporations took the next step and began asking for stand-alone CBTs (computer-based training) to launch from their Intranet registration systems, the techies continued in control. For the techies, it was a technical problem to solve, not a learning problem. They focused on how to make desktop CBTs and PowerPoints work on Intra-Internets. Strategically the eLearning industry was selling technical expertise and not powerful learning experiences.

The Problem with 'Traditional' eLearning

To develop a 'traditional' eLearning program, 'techies' or web developers took existing classroom training materials and repurposed them for the web. In the industry it was called 'shoveling content'. The tighter the budget, the more PowerPoint was just placed online. That meant the developers organized the content into topics and subtopics and threw in a question every few screens. Nothing more than 'text' and 'test'. They expected that to satisfy the 'learning gap in our current economy.

The expertise of great trainers and the knowledge of how people learn to the point of performance improvement were ignored by these early eLearning developers. (*Actually for compliance-based law departments this 'text' and 'test' eLearning did solve a problem; the company could demonstrate that the employees had been exposed to the regulations. However, that did not mean that management or employees changed their attitudes or behaviors!)

View From the Trenches


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The Revolution in eLearning

Training vs. eLearning... or Is It?

Remember that really great teacher

- Supported you
- Gave you a new vision
- Said you could do it
- Gave you the tools
- Challenged you
- Transformed you
- Practice Practice
- You can do anything....



Then there is that dreadful one

- Gave you tests
- Lectured to you
- Gave you more tests
- You forgot it all, right
- What was his name anyway?

From the perspective of the average employee or consumer, the 'traditional' eLearning program became an experience to shun or abandon. Why? These 'traditional' eLearning programs were like all the 'bad' teachers they had in school – the ones who threw information at you. You remember them. The information went in one ear, stayed around for the short-term 'pass the test' memorization cycle, and then came out the other. It was boring beyond belief!

So having endured school, employees knew that the lecture

and memorize cycle could not help them do a better job. As for consumers, 'text' and 'test' eLearning did little to help them with complex decisions, actions and equipment.

Some corporations tried cute animations and jeopardy-style games to lure learners into their web-based eLearning programs. All they got for their efforts were game junkies, but learning did not improve.

Other companies tried training and product videos as an eLearning solution. They should have read the research. While videos are absorbing in the moment, they mostly move in and out of our minds without leaving much of a trace. In the eLearning environment, this problem was actually compounded since videos to the desktop are filled with distractions and interruptions.

Imagine Training Without Trainers

'Traditional' eLearning ignored tens of thousands of trainers while stripping the eLearning experience of what makes great training work!

Given all the problems with traditional eLearning, why didn't trainers enter the eLearning market to improve the eLearning product? For most small to medium size training companies and departments, eLearning was too expensive to launch, too complicated to run, and too resource-intensive to develop, requiring programmers, multiple departments and content developers. All this expense and resource requirements placed eLearning out of the reach of all but the largest businesses and independent training companies.

To compound the problem, since the trainers were not included in the development of 'traditional' eLearning' their job security was threatened. In their minds, they were to be replaced by boring, ineffective 'text' and 'test' eLearning programs. No wonder most trainers steered a wide path around any involvement with eLearning. The trainers were simply left out.

View From the 'Educator's Ivory Tower'

What do good trainers do that 'traditional' eLearning ignored? What must be added back into eLearning to lead learners through the learning process and on to behavior change and performance improvement?

Good trainers facilitate learning to the level of performance improvement. They do this by engaging the minds of the learners, and getting them to set goals, motivating them through the learners' own self-interest. They get the learners to practice and apply new learning through clever exercises, individual reflection and group discussion. The good trainers extend the learning into performance through follow-through coaching and performance tracking.

Good trainers know how human learning works and of the underlying psychological processes involved in effective learning and development. In their trainings, they make use of the research findings about human learning and performance such as:

- Effective learning takes time and practice.
- If learners do not apply learning in different situations as they are learning it, the learning is unlikely to be applied in new situations later on.
- Short-term memorization of content to pass tests does not result in learning being permanently stored in long-term memory.
- Stories, models and metaphors are stored more easily in the brain than facts and concepts.
- Emotional impact enhances learning.
- Learners who set their own learning goals tied to their own motivational system are far more likely to learn, remember and turn learning into performance.
- Video-watching is a very ineffective means of learning. There is no time for the learner to reflect and elaborate on the information – necessary steps for long-term utilization of the learning.
- Active and interactive learning is far more effective than passive learning.

Clearly, 'traditional' eLearning did not incorporate the practices of effective trainers nor the principles from the fields of research regarding learning and performance. 'Traditional' eLearning did not solve the problems of the need for improved performance in the workplace.

Re-Inventing eLearning

In 2002, a team of learning specialists and I (Dr. Diane Kramer, PeakSkills Learning Systems CEO) focused on those issues of poor eLearning quality and of trainers' being left out of the eLearning world. We were determined to come up with breakthrough eLearning solutions. Our goals were to: bring disenfranchised trainers into the eLearning world, invent deep, transformational eLearning methodology, and make custom eLearning easy and affordable for even the smallest trainer and company.

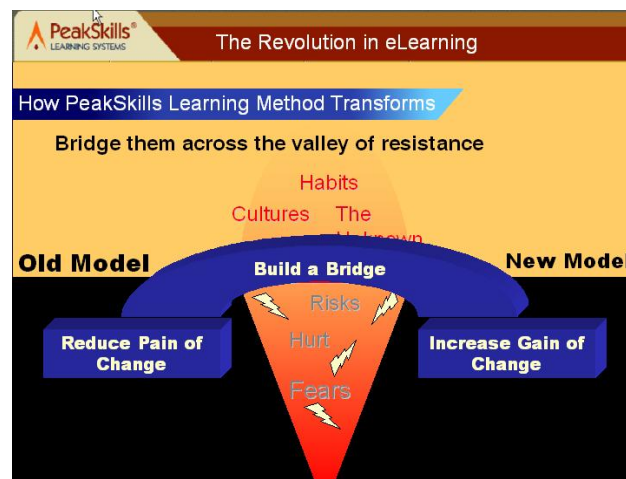
Over three years, we invented a low-cost easy-to-use eLearning methodology and technology that:

- transitions trainers into the eLearning world
- trains them in how to translate their training methods into highly effective eLearning courses and programs
- trains them in how to use the PeakSkills eLearning Platform for online authoring and administering
- delivers streams of long-term revenues to trainers from the eLearning markets

We launched the PeakSkills eLearning Platform in September of 2004. We have already trained a dozen or more trainers in the past few months on the PeakSkills Learning Method and eLearning Platform. The first trainer courses have just launched on the PeakSkills eLearning Platform. Our PeakSkills User Group of trainers has begun. We are just beginning to offer our program to trainers over the internet.

The rest of this paper talks about the details of our methodology and technology and tells you how to get involved.

Bringing the Transformational Trainer into eLearning: The PeakSkills Learning Method



To teach trainers how to develop *transformational eLearning courses and programs, PeakSkills has developed the PeakSkills Learning Method.

The PeakSkills Learning Method is an instructional design methodology for developing eLearning courses and programs built on the principles of transformational learning. The PeakSkills Learning Method teaches trainers and consultants to develop transformational eLearning that: extends learning into performance, improves the learner's ability to adapt

learning to new situations, enhances the learner's ability to track progress and use feedback (meta-cognitive skills), and improves the learner's ability to problem-solve.

(*Transformational learning is learning that improves long-term performance through facilitating behavior change as well as improving complex decision-making and problem-solving and the generalization of learning in novel situations. Transformational learning is based on the psychological processes underlying human learning and cognition. It's principles are drawn from research in the fields of Cognitive Psychology, Educational Psychology and the Neuro-sciences, as well as 'best learning practices' from the fields of Accelerated Learning and Neuro-Linguistic Programming).

Trainers can use the PeakSkills Learning Method to design new content or to transform existing training content into self-paced eLearning programs.

The PeakSkills eLearning Platform

To bring the trainer into the eLearning world, our program for trainers includes hands-on training on the PeakSkills eLearning Platform, designed to synergize with the PeakSkills Learning Method.

The PeakSkills eLearning Platform is an Internet based learning management system that is sold as an ASP-hosted solution. The PeakSkills eLearning Platform contains administration, authoring, instructor and learner areas. The uniqueness of the PeakSkills eLearning Platform resides in its sophisticated and yet easy-to-use authoring area that can be used to create transformational learning. Using PeakSkills, trainers with no programming or graphic design background can turn out transformational eLearning courses that lead to long-term improvement in performance as well as improvement in problem-solving and decision-making.

The PeakSkills eLearning Platform can host self-paced eLearning courses, instructor-led tutorials and virtual classroom meetings to give companies the best of both worlds – 24/7, always available, courses for independent learning as well as scheduled class meetings. PeakSkills can also be used to administer stand-up training combined with eLearning. Additional learning resources such as assignments, action plans, discussions, chats, journals and references insure that PeakSkills can satisfy any 'learning' challenge to the point of performance change.

The Platform

The four easy-to-use areas of the PeakSkills eLearning Platform (learner, administrator, instructor and author) give trainers a learning management system that is economical, easy-to-use and delivers eLearning courses to the level of behavior change.

The Method

The PeakSkills eLearning Platform authoring area provides a series of templates for custom content development that rivals high priced custom eLearning. Those templates were designed to match with the content designed by the PeakSkills Learning Method. In other words, trainers and subject matter experts can design content using the PeakSkills Learning Method that will produce deep behavioral change, and the templates can be used to transfer that content to the PeakSkills eLearning Platform.

Total Control

The PeakSkills eLearning Platform gives the company or trainer total control of its eLearning courses, student administration, testing, and real-time content changes (without input from special authoring tools, content developers or programmers).

Because its ease-of-use and because all authoring is built into the Learning Management System (PeakSkills eLearning Platform), there are no hidden costs for scaling up or down. There are no hidden costs for authoring changes, for updates and maintenance. A simple price-per-seat (our pricing model for hosting courses) is easy to forecast.

With Virtual Change

Any trainer or content developer with the basic technical skills of PowerPoint can quickly be trained to maintain and modify these courses. Should content need to be changed at a later date or a page needed to be added, such changes are easy and fast. The course can be changed and published in the same amount of time to change a PowerPoint slide. No programming is needed or exotic authoring tools required.

Conclusion

Deep and Transformational

Our team at PeakSkills has accomplished its mission of developing a breakthrough method of eLearning instructional design paired with a state-of-the art affordable eLearning Platform. Our offerings are easy-to-use, affordable and serve as a gateway for trainers to add their expertise to the eLearning world.

PeakSkills Benefits

Benefits include:

- **Ease-of-Use** – PeakSkills eLearning Platform was totally designed by trainers for trainers. Trainers love the way the system “just makes sense”. If an instructor can handle PowerPoint, this system will take them to a whole new level of eLearning development within a few days of training.
- **Intuitive Content Development** – This template-driven system naturally leverages NLP and Accelerated Learning techniques. By combing a Knowledge Management system with learning methodologies, exceptional quality course building is rapid, easy and inexpensive.
- **Total Control** – The instructor can change any lesson content at any moment.
- **Highly Economical** – PeakSkills eLearning Platform is priced on a simple price per seat program. Pricing is predictable. There are no hidden costs.
- **Flexible** – PeakSkills eLearning courses are used for: pre-sales learning demos, employee, partner and customer training, customer service tutorials.
- **Turnkey Solution** – Everything you need to get started: training, content development and hosting.

PeakSkills is a full service channel driven eLearning company offering the following services:

- eLearning Marketing and Strategic Consulting
- eLearning Content Development
- Training on transformational learning and eLearning Methods
- ASP Hosting of eLearning courses and programs on the PeakSkills eLearning Platform

For a demonstration, training and more information, contact:

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