The Advantages and Disadvantages of a Virtual Learning Environment

By Knowledge Anywhere

The success of your company depends not only on your ability to hire the right people but also on your ability to train them to do their jobs effectively. This training doesn't end after the hiring process; rather, it’s just beginning. If you expect your business to grow and evolve to keep up with trends and advances, your employees need to grow and evolve, too.

The pressure is on: how are you going to do that?

You have lots of options, including traditional classroom methods like seminars and workshops. Of course, you might also consider a virtual learning platform, in which case you would join the 81 percent of companies who provide at least some of their training online.

What is a Virtual Learning Environment?

A virtual learning environment is an online system that allows education materials to be transmitted through the internet to transfer knowledge from organization to employee, or teacher to student. Virtual learning environment examples include the following and more, all of which can be accessed via an online or computer-based system:

- Distance Learning Degree Programs
- Professional Certification Courses
- Instructional Videos
- Video or Audio Lectures
For your business, your virtual learning environment might include your employee handbook, instructions on how to use new software or equipment, sales or customer service training, new employee orientation, and more. As with any type of training system, there are virtual learning environment advantages and disadvantages.

**Advantages of a Virtual Learning Environment**

- **Easy Tracking and Assessment**: With your virtual learning environment software, it’s easy to tell which employees have completed the activities. Built-in assessments like quizzes can help you ensure they’re absorbing the material.

- **Seamless Delivery**: Every employee has access to the same material, no matter when he or she gets hired. Your message is consistent through the years; when you make a change in company policy, that can be updated in your learning system, and all employees have access to it.

- **Time Savings**: You don’t always know when you will have to hire a new employee. If someone quits unexpectedly and is replaced, you might not have time to train the new employee properly. She might have to wait for a yearly seminar; in the meantime, she’s under-prepared and overwhelmed, which puts the position at risk again. With a virtual learning environment, your new employees receive thorough training immediately.

- **Financial Savings**: With an investment in virtual learning platforms, you’re paying someone (or taking the time yourself) to develop curriculum once, which can then be used over and over again. Compare this to the expense of hosting workshops every time you hire new people or make changes in your business: paying speakers and instructors, arranging venues and travel, and losing productivity when employees are out of the office. It’s easy to see how cost-effective a virtual learning environment is.

- **Communication and Connection**: [BBC Active mentions communication](https://www.bbcactive.com) as one of the advantages of a virtual learning environment. With forums and message boards, seasoned employees can answer questions and offer mentoring and advice for new employees. This saves time for those in management roles and builds a sense of connection and community among your team.

- **Flexibility**: Employees can choose where and when they complete the training. They can revisit sections that were unclear, or review the entire curriculum from time to time. It’s also flexible for you since you can add or change material at any time.
Disadvantages of a Virtual Learning Environment

- **Dwindling Attention Spans**: How many browser windows do you have open right now? Many people are programmed to multi-task when they’re on the computer, despite studies showing that [98 percent of people are not good at multi-tasking](http://example.com). This could lead to skimming articles or starting a video that turns into background noise as they try to complete another project at the same time. Of course, you can help prevent that by keeping lessons and videos short and simple.

- **Getting Lost in the Material**: Depending on each employee’s learning style, some might feel lost when they can’t ask an instructor for clarification in real time. Others might require lessons that are more hands-on, visual, or auditory than what you end up offering on your platform.

- **Discomfort with Technology**: Though many industries rely heavily on technology and employees are well-versed in its use, you might be in an industry that doesn’t require that kind of knowledge. In this case, you might have employees who feel they have two daunting tasks ahead of them: taking the training and understanding the virtual learning environment software that allows them to take the training.

- **Limitations**: A virtual learning environment might not be the most effective way to teach someone to build or use a complicated piece of machinery. It also doesn’t offer that human-to-human contact, which may limit your opportunities for team-building and role-playing activities, brainstorming, or discussion.

The good news is that when you base your training in a virtual learning environment, you still have the option to supplement it with in-person classroom-style training on an as-needed basis. In the meantime, you’re benefiting from the many advantages of using virtual learning platforms.

Only you can decide what type of training is the best fit for your company, and you owe it to yourself to learn as much as possible before you make that investment. At [Knowledge Anywhere](http://example.com), we’ve been offering elearning solutions since 1998: no matter what questions you might have about any additional advantages or disadvantages to a virtual learning environment, we can answer them for you. [Contact us today](http://example.com) to learn more about our LMS, [Virtual Reality Training](http://example.com), and Course Development services.