

VIRTUAL CLASS READINESS

Is your training department ready for VILT?

Before training departments can make the move from traditional, in-person training to virtual instructor-led training (VILT), they need to understand the virtual classroom, the value of virtual training and how this type of training actually works.

Executive Summary

Online training gives students the freedom to learn where it's convenient for them—and makes learning accessible to all customers, employees and partners. However, making the move from traditional, in-person training to virtual training is considered a daunting task by some training departments.

There's educating key stakeholders on how the virtual classroom works, demonstrating the cost savings and value, and choosing vendors. In addition, there's managing the actual class delivery—from the technical aspects of training sessions—to instructor preparation, support, material distribution and contingency plans.

But the move to virtual training is actually quite simple.

How do you know if your organization is ready for this type of change? This eBook will give you insight into your organization's virtual training readiness and help you manage the transition to virtual training.





This is an interactive eBook!

Here's how to use it:

- 1 Answer the questions by clicking on the color-coded buttons.

EXAMPLE

QUESTION 1

Are you concerned that individuals in your organization will think virtual training is the same as a webinar?

YES ☐ NO ☐

- 2 When you click the button, it will take you to the appropriate tip.

EXAMPLE

QUESTION 1

Are you concerned that individuals in your organization will think virtual training is the same as a webinar?

YES ☐

1. Virtual training is not the same as a webinar

Virtual training is not the same as a webinar. Virtual training is a type of training that uses technology to deliver content to learners. It can be used for a variety of purposes, including onboarding new employees, providing ongoing training, and delivering specialized training. Virtual training can be used for a variety of purposes, including onboarding new employees, providing ongoing training, and delivering specialized training. Virtual training can be used for a variety of purposes, including onboarding new employees, providing ongoing training, and delivering specialized training.

3

After reading the tip, click the return button to go back to the questionnaire.

EXAMPLE



4

Answer the next questions and repeat the process!

EXAMPLE

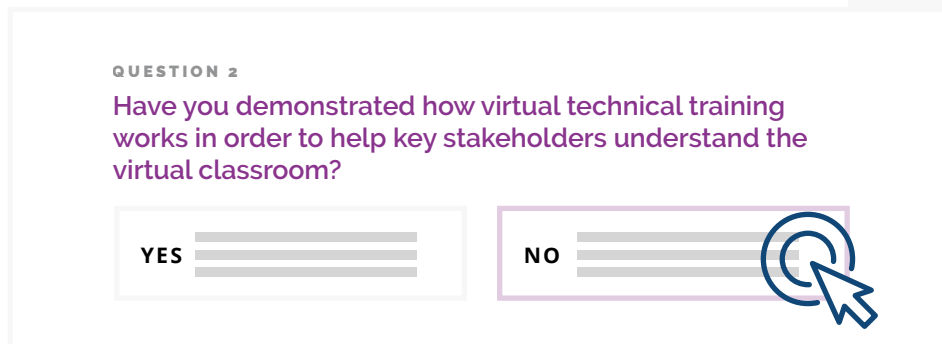


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Have you been considering the move to virtual training?

Not sure if your training department is ready for virtual training? This 12-question assessment will give you insight into your organization's readiness.

Stakeholder Education

QUESTION 1

Are you concerned that individuals in your organization will think virtual training is the same as a webinar?

YES

Go to Stakeholder Education to learn the difference between virtual training and webinars.

NO

That's a good start! If they already know the difference, that creates a solid foundation for understanding the value that virtual training provides.

QUESTION 2

Have you demonstrated how virtual technical training works in order to help key stakeholders understand the virtual classroom?

YES

Great! Depending on their feedback from the demonstration, you can target which areas you need to focus on to get their buy-in.

NO

Go to Stakeholder Education for your first steps to demo virtual technical training to your team.

Return on Investment

QUESTION 3

Will your organization experience a cost savings from switching to virtual training?

YES

Great! Cost savings is a powerful motivation for companies to switch to virtual training.

NO

Go to Return on Investment to learn why virtual training is more cost effective compared to traditional, in-person training.

QUESTION 4

Are you receiving pressure from management to lower your traditional, in-person training expenses?

YES

This is great! It means your management is ready to hear about a lower-cost training option—which describes virtual training.

NO

Visit the Return on Investment section to learn how much virtual training can save training departments.

QUESTION 5

Do you think you'll see similar learning results for students in a virtual classroom when compared to students in a traditional classroom?

YES

Yes! Research from the U.S. Department of Labor shows that learning results from online classrooms exceed face-to-face results.

NO

Do online students learn better or worse than in-person students? Find out what the U.S. Department of Labor discovered in the ROI section.





Transition to Online

QUESTION 6

Do you have criteria specific to virtual delivery for choosing and evaluating instructors?

YES

You're on your way to building your instructor team for virtual training.

NO

That's OK! Visit the Transition to Online section to learn the 5 skills that help virtual instructors be effective.

QUESTION 7

Do you have a training plan to upskill those who will be instructors in the virtual classroom?

YES

Great! And just to make sure you cover all the training areas, visit the Transition to Online section to learn about the 7 training areas we recommend.

NO

Review the 7 areas we recommend to upskill your instructors. It's located in the Transition to Online section of this eBook.

QUESTION 8

Do you have criteria specific to choosing and evaluating virtual training vendors?

YES

Awesome! You're on your way to finding the training vendor that works for you.

NO

Not to worry, go to the Transition to Online section where you'll find questions to help you determine which training platform best suits your goals.

QUESTION 9

Have you (or do you plan to) run at least one pilot before launching virtual training sessions?

YES

Perfect. Performing a pilot class is best practice—it really is the only way to get a hands-on, first person understanding of the virtual training product.

NO

Prior to going live, it's best practice to run a pilot class with training vendors. Turn to the Transition to Online section to learn about next steps.





Class Delivery

QUESTION 10

Do you plan to use an assistant instructor to manage the technical aspects of each training session?

YES

Being overprepared is always better, especially during your first virtual training classes.

NO

Turn to the Class Delivery section to find out when an assistant instructor is suggested. It will depend on the number of students in your virtual class.

QUESTION 11

Have you determined how materials for virtual training will be distributed?

YES

Great! Your training curriculum is intellectual property, so distributing them properly is very important.

NO

Turn to the Class Delivery section to learn why proper materials distribution is critical in virtual training.

QUESTION 12

Do you have a contingency plan in place if the online training platform has unforeseen issues during training sessions?

YES

Perfect! Virtual training classes have many moving parts, so it's better to have contingency plans in case things go wrong.

NO

Not a problem. Flip to the Class Delivery section to learn why 24/7 Support is a critical service that ReadyTech provides to all of its customers.

1. Virtual training is not the same as a webinar

Confusing webinars with virtual training is common. However, they are two completely different platforms with different uses. The term, webinar, comes from a combination of web (online via the computer) and seminar (a lecture/training format). A webinar is a type of web conference that is typically one-way communication.

While polling participation can be integrated into webinars to allow for remote audience participation, speakers typically talk to an audience with limited audience interaction. The main difference between the two platforms is that webinars typically share ideas and experiences or promote a speaker, while virtual classrooms facilitate learning and have the option for hands-on exercises (known as virtual training labs).

With virtual training labs, students can learn how to use your software in a real-life environment, which drastically improves the learning results for students.

For example, virtual training tools allow instructors to see a student's screen and provide them with step-by-step guidance. These tools—such as screen sharing, private/public chat and whiteboard—give instructors complete oversight and control over the students' learning experience.

Additionally, virtual training software is typically built especially for training organizations—so they understand the unique needs of training departments. For example, some vendors offer 24/7 support to students and instructors—ensuring that classes start on time and that training departments run efficiently.



2. Demonstrate how virtual training actually works

Giving a virtual training demonstration is a simple process.

The first step is to create your training image. Typical formats used to build training images are .OVA, .OVF or .IMG. Next, contact virtual training vendors and ask them for a free trial with your training image. Prior to starting your free trial, be sure to get training from the vendor on their training product to ensure that you can use the tool properly. And finally, request a free trial with a long enough time window, so you can perform a well-prepared demonstration.

Assuming that your training image is prepared, training vendors can typically get your free trial ready in a few days or 1-2 weeks—it just depends on how well your training image is built and if your training environment is complicated. So keep this timeline in mind when scheduling your stakeholder demonstration.



90%

of companies use virtual classrooms to enable and enhance learning

62%

of companies offer virtual learning to increase their student population

16%

increase in productivity is realized with ongoing training

3. Switching to virtual training is cost effective

The bottom line is that virtual training is cost effective compared to in-person, traditional training. Virtual training not only reduces travel expenses, but also decreases the money spent on learning materials and training venues.

Training departments that offer virtual training don't need to invest in the real estate footprint of training classrooms, the IT staff to set up training labs or the administrative staff for scheduling students.

Virtual training increases the reach of your training department because of several reasons. First, online platforms have no limitation in the number of courses that can be taught at any given time (unlike brick-and-mortar training facilities that have physical space limitations). Second, students can attend a class from anywhere with an Internet connection (unlike brick-and-mortar facilities that have geographic limitations). And finally, virtual training increases student reach by lowering the cost to attend the class (unlike brick-and-mortar training that imposes a requirement to travel to a physical training facility).

It is important to note that while virtual training is cost effective in most scenarios, there are times when this training will not lead to savings. For example, if a training department only sends one instructor to a nearby student location (therefore not requiring any travel or hotel expenses), VILT will not lead to any cost savings.



56%

of studies found that students were more satisfied with online vs. in-person training

30-70%

is the average companies save when they switch to online training

63%

of companies use "blended learning" as their primary training approach

4. Virtual training lowers training expenses

Virtual training provides significant cost savings. In fact, companies can save between \$9,550 and \$15,870 by moving one course from a traditional classroom to virtual instructor-led training (VILT). This includes costs related to technology, travel and transportation, as well as productivity loss experienced by students taking time away from work.

Learn how much your organization can save by switching to VILT by requesting ReadyTech's Cost Savings Calculator from get-info@readytech.com.

Compared to traditional face-to-face or classroom-style training, VILT is substantially more cost efficient. The cost differences are greatest when multiple students and multiple instructors are traveling to a training location (where more travel is required) and for mid-level and senior-level staff (where the cost of lost productivity is highest). The bottom line is that VILT clearly equates to substantial cost savings for companies.

5. Virtual students learn better than in-person students

When compared to in-person training, virtual training provides the same content, same instructors, same learning experience and the same learning results and productivity gains.

In fact, a U.S. Department of Education study of online learning found that learning outcomes for students who engaged in online learning exceeded those of students receiving face-to-face instruction.

So what's the difference?

Virtual training provides a more convenient delivery format. It also allows employees to schedule training around other priorities and get training without being away from work, which improves their lifestyle and reduces "wear and tear" from traveling.



6. Choose effective and experienced virtual instructors

The skills of online instructors are vital to the learning process. Similar to face-to-face instructors, online instructors need a strong foundation in content, instruction and assessment. In addition, they need experience in other specific areas, such as:

Grasping the ins and outs of specific training tools

It is very important for instructors to completely understand the virtual training tools they use. A thorough grasp of the training tool will improve the students' learning experience and make instructors more effective at transferring knowledge to students.

Being tech savvy

In a VILT class, the instructor needs to juggle multiple technologies to deliver the training class: the training tool, the technology they are teaching, their own computer, and potentially questions about the students' computers. Because of this, it is essential that instructors are comfortable with technology, so they can seamlessly juggle multiple tech-related responsibilities.

Being able to effectively communicate and establish an online presence

Online instructors need to be intentional about creating a presence in their online courses to minimize the feeling of distance that inevitably comes with virtual learning. This online presence can be established by the way instructors guide students through the learning process; the instructor's specific personality and teaching style; and the connections instructors make with students (understanding the student's specific learning objectives). In addition, effective communication helps to encourage a strong and healthy teaching environment.

Understanding how to use collaboration and web conferencing tools

Thanks to modern technologies, individuals can communicate with each other easily via web conferencing tools. These tools not only allow for collaboration with students but allow students to collaborate and communicate with one another. Since these tools are an integral part of teaching virtual classes, an instructor with a firm understanding of them will deliver more effective online courses.

Being productive in a remote environment

Most online instructors are themselves remote employees, meaning they often work from home. This allows instructors to provide online instruction in a comfortable setting and gives them autonomy over their schedules. Because of this, online instructors must be self-motivated and able to stay productive outside of a "traditional" office setting. And with so many tools available to help individuals connect visually and vocally, there's no reason that a lack of face time should detract an online instructor from being productive while working in a remote environment.

In addition to these specific skills, online instructors should also be able to help learners develop a deep understanding of content in a virtual environment; understand how students learn online (by being an online student themselves); and being able to empathize with students while in a virtual training environment.





7. Properly train instructors for the virtual classroom

Because teaching in the virtual classroom requires specific skills, it is very important to properly train your instructors. A successful training plan includes the following:

1. Teaching instructors how to use the VILT product and ensuring they have a deep understanding of the environment and all tools. A tip: Once you've selected your virtual training software, contact the vendor's Customer Success department to get a complete tutorial of their tool.
2. Helping instructors develop their presentation skills. For example, prior to an instructor "going live," have them teach you or your team—and record their presentation. Then provide constructive feedback to improve their online delivery skills.
3. Encouraging instructors to be more energetic and extroverted since they are not in the same classroom as students. This is difficult because being introverted/extroverted is often a personal characteristic. If possible, select instructors that already exhibit an extroverted personality for your online instructor positions.
4. Guiding instructors on how to change activities every 7 to 10 minutes (moving between lectures, demonstrations, virtual training labs, and Q&A). The best way to achieve this is to get the instructors comfortable with the virtual training software. If they are comfortable with the software they're using, they are more likely to switch the class between lectures, labs, demonstrations and Q&A.
5. Supporting instructors in trying new techniques and letting go of old habits. For example, in-person instructors are accustomed to seeing students' facial expressions to judge class engagement. In virtual training, instructors have to get accustomed to the habit of using the virtual training software to survey the class's engagement level. Typically this is achieved by using an Engagement Monitor or asking the students to update their statuses with emoticons.
6. Providing numerous opportunities to practice, practice, practice. It's recommended that your instructor give at least 3 practice classes (to colleagues or family members) before going live. After each practice class, have the mock students provide the instructor with feedback.
7. Have new instructors attend online courses (as students) given by your most experienced instructors. This will give them valuable insights into how your best instructors manage their online class, navigate through the curriculum and keep students engaged. It might also give your new instructors ideas on how they would teach the online course better or more appropriate to their personal style.



8. Choose and evaluate virtual training vendors

There are numerous online training platforms. When searching for a platform, it is vital to define exactly what it will be used for, who will use it and under what conditions. Below are some questions to help you determine which online training platform will best suit your organization's unique needs:

Do students need access to a hands-on lab environment?

Hands-on labs are a critical component of high-quality technical training. A hands-on lab environment provides every student with a realistic hands-on training experience.

How many concurrent classes, how many students per class and where are students located?

The answers to these questions determine the total lab hosting capacity you will need to accommodate your training demand. The tricky part is that training demand can be very volatile and the solution of your choice should be able to accommodate your peak demand. It's also important to work with a vendor that has data centers in each region when you are training a global audience to ensure good user experiences.

How consistent is your training demand?

Training goes through periods of low and high demand, so selecting an online training platform with a pricing structure that can match your training needs is critical.

Do you need a multi-language online training platform?

Most platforms don't support localization. If you have instructors teaching students internationally, it is best practice to select an online training platform that supports localization so international students can navigate the platform easily.

Do students need access to the online training platform from outside the office?

Online training platforms that are accessible outside of a company's intranet are a necessity, especially for customer facing training.

What kind of features do your instructors want?

There are numerous ways to interact with online students, such as via chat, screen sharing, webcam, audio, assessments or polls. Each feature performs a specific function and can help online courses become more interactive. However, not all online training platforms offer the same features, so make sure you select an online training platform with the features your instructors want.

Does your online training platform provide your training department with everything it needs to give online training?

Online training typically requires presentation tools, hands-on labs, materials management and assessments. Choosing a vendor that provides all of these products will place a lower technology burden on instructors and students.



9. Run a pilot class with training vendors

Prior to going live with an online course, instructors should perform a pilot class—preferably with actual customers, although that’s not mandatory. The purpose of the pilot class is to do a dry run of the class, giving the training department an opportunity to work out any technical kinks, receive student feedback and identify issues with the curriculum. It also gives instructors the chance to check for inaccurate visuals or trim down lectures that are way too long. After the pilot, your training department should work with your training vendor, your IT staff and your curriculum developers to fix/update the virtual class as needed.

Depending on its complexity, your training vendor should assist you with your pilot class with no fees. However, during the pilot, make sure your training department works closely with your training vendor’s implementation team to ensure that any issues discovered during the pilot are resolved. To get started with the process of offering a pilot class, request a free trial class with ReadyTech at get-info@readytech.com.





10. Assistant instructors should manage the technical aspects of training

It is very helpful to use an assistant if your instructors are teaching a course for the first time, are new to online training, if the course topics are complex or if the course has a very large number of students.

An assistant instructor is usually suggested once an online classroom reaches 12 to 15 students. Assistant instructors enable the primary instructor to focus on delivering the course content, while the assistant instructor can focus on student engagement and troubleshooting technical issues.



11. Proper materials distribution is critical

Because training materials are proprietary intellectual property, it is vital to find a secure way to transfer and control materials.

Training departments spend money developing the curriculum, so developing a secure way to distribute materials is very important. It is also important to ensure that materials are difficult to “copy and paste.”

For example, ReadyTech has developed two ways to securely transfer materials. In addition to providing a Materials Management tab, there’s an inbox/outbox tool within the lab where instructors can transfer materials. These materials are only accessible from within the lab.

12. Contingency plans are vital for the virtual environment

Virtual classrooms have numerous moving pieces. Not only do students need to connect to class, but instructors also need to deliver learning content, while IT departments must verify that class performance is top-notch.

Any number of technical issues can put an end to a class for an entire day. And a lost day negatively affects customers who are forced to reschedule classes, as well as the lost revenue for training departments. As a result, immediate technical support is essential for every virtual environment.

If technical support is readily available, instructors are free to engage students and focus on delivering quality training. In addition, by staying focused on students, instructors can reduce the risk of student distraction, frustration and dissatisfaction. Decreasing technical difficulties and barriers through support also means that students are free to fully participate in the virtual classroom experience and concentrate their efforts on the tasks of learning, engaging, and collaborating.

With the popularity of online and self-paced classes, it is common for students to take training at odd hours and away from traditional instructor office hours. In addition, students can log in to classes around the world and across many different time zones. Consequently, this 24/7/365 accessibility means that your software vendor’s support team must be able to provide support to anyone at any hour.





ReadyTech provides sophisticated, yet easy-to-use online training software. Our 25 years in the training business has helped us design the feature-rich solutions that global training organizations are looking for to deliver great training.

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