# Emerging Learning and Development Trends For a Post-COVID World And Beyond



As remote and hybrid work transform the employee experience, life sciences companies need to be asking themselves, "How can we make learning more accessible, engaging, and personal?" Within the learning and development (L&D) industry, leveraging the latest technological innovations to create engaging experiences is not a new trend; however, educational and training initiatives and the creative ways in which they are applied hold the greatest opportunity for increased value in the future.

In this article, we explore the indicators and trends that will shape life sciences learning and training over the next few years. Each approach existed pre-COVID, but with the increased prevalence of work from home, they have been accelerated (and in some cases pivoted) to adapt to the new way in which we work. In this article, we dissect these emerging approaches from a general view and touch on considerations for the new hybrid model of working.



## **Personalized Flexibility**

An emerging shift in the workforce, resulting from the pandemic, is the desire for flexibility and personalization in multiple facets of life. This has increased the expectation that organizations must incorporate more choices for employees to retain valuable talent.

Within L&D, pre-pandemic programs were often designed around a one-size-fits-all learner journey, where individual preferences and learning needs came second to the business need for training. We are now seeing that the L&D space is being disrupted the same way as the physical office environment.

L&D teams are being asked to rise to the newly realized needs and expectations of their employees, by utilizing the same agility and flexibility displayed by both the organization and the individuals regarding remote work. Organizations must offer learner-driven journeys and asynchronous models to support the flexible schedules and locations of each employee. In the following approaches, we will discuss support for this hybrid world and what we envision happening over next few years as the employee learning experience continues to evolve.



## **High-fidelity Simulation Training**

High-fidelity simulation training is an education methodology that involves using sophisticated life-like scenarios and environments where trainees learn through experiencing hyper-realistic exercises. This form of application-based learning provides a close to real-world experience, mimicking on-the-job tasks that allow learners to make better decisions when faced with these scenarios in real life.Investing in high-fidelity simulation training can look like many things: it may take the form of virtual reality (VR) or conversation simulators. These formats help bridge the emerging gaps in experience that arise from a decrease in actual face-to-face opportunities, ensuring that when they do occur teams are prepared and polished. Simulations also build and retain soft skill sets, including empathy, that can be lost with less in-person dialogue, an especially important skill in healthcare.

Simulation training is a tactic well suited for all levels of learners as they progress through their learning journey. However, it also benefits high performers, helping them build mastery-level skill sets—often a difficult group to retain, refine, and engage. As innovative technologies such as VR and augmented reality (AR) become more affordable and accessible, and live event participation remains more selective by those attending, we expect to see increased investments in high-fidelity learning simulators to make those moments as impactful and memorable as possible.





### **Multi-modal Digital Learning Modules**

Multi-modal digital learning seamlessly integrates several forms of visual and interactive digital media into one learner experience. This format offers a balanced and engaging learning experience as it is widely accepted that <u>students learn best through multisensory</u> <u>approaches to subjects</u>.

From the micro (module) and macro (curriculum) level, this includes a suite of potential media options, such as video, animation, quizzes, activities, AR, VR, and 3D models. Based on the distinct learning moments each one provides; these formats work together to create a memorable learning experience for improved recall.

Learning modules that combine different media types offer the promise of effectively training a broad audience by selecting the ideal media for each bite-sized module to optimize learning and increase engagement. Over time, e-learning programs will build libraries of proven and successful module structures where users can customize their own learning journey. This will lead to more personalized learning journeys that are specific to an individual's preferences, knowledge gaps, and interests.

To make this a reality, digital literacy and accessibility must be considered for these programs to be implemented and universally impactful. Teams often displaya wide range of digital experience, so it is critical to ensure that all members feel comfortable with the tools being offered. Consider developing user guides, offering training sessions, and tutorials that assist with successful adoption. With many people accessing content from remote locations, access via a high-bandwidth internet cannot always be assumed. It is important to develop media assets that are optimized for all types of connections. This will ensure that the guality of experience remains consistent for all learners.

Learning modules that combine different media types offer the promise of effectively training a broad audience



### Storytelling for Empathy

Narrative-based learning is an optimal training technique to humanize content, engage learners, and connect them to the subject matter. Weaving storytelling and different perspectives into scientific learning enhances reflective thinking (SOURCE), which can lead to more empathetic decision making, interactions, and communication. Storytelling's presence in L&D is evolving beyond simply communicating the user journey and is being incorporated into more content-heavy areas to refine data and characterize information. As we begin to build more story-centric experiences for omnichannel and multichannel worlds, adapting story formats to fit appropriately with differing channels is essential. This ensures that the story remains both impactful and easy to follow, while balancing sensitivity of the content.

If we look at the life sciences industry specifically, teaching emotional support is just as important as medical support. In a recent study by Accenture, 52% of patients said having a provider who listens, understands patient's needs, and provides emotional support is an important factor in creating a positive experience with a healthcare provider (Accenture 2021).

#### Figure 1. Empathy is as important as the medical treatment (Accenture 2021)



# Q: Which three, if any, of the following factors are most important for your positive experience with a medical provider?

Currently, a gap exists between these two groups as physicians must translate from a data-centric and scientific format to a more personal and empathetic one. The disconnect between content retention and delivery leaves HCPs with the burden of adapting their approach when applying data into practice. Pharmaceutical companies are presented with a great opportunity to modify their style of sharing to meet HCP's needs and focus on storytelling delivery for training.

### **Collaborative Peer-to-Peer Programs**

Peer-to-peer (P2P) programs have been an integral concept in many learning programs to build trust, community, and understanding. Traditionally, P2P programs share information one way—from facilitator to attendee—creating a clear divide between learner and expert. Although often effective, we are now seeing a shift to a more collaborative P2P approach and the emergence of workshops, train-the-trainer activities, and ideation sessions. By removing the divide between expert and learner, space is created for what scholars' call "social" or "collaborative" learning.

This style of learning is rooted in problem-solving and discussion-based activities, rather than didactic learning. This approach encourages diverse views about topics, offering the host organization a channel for organic feedback. This feedback can then funnel back into strategic discussions around positioning, while also creating more engaging and memorable moments as attendees have been active participants.

Physically present sessions offer natural moments of discussion, before and after the presentation, even if not built directly into the agenda. Virtual sessions, however, should be elevated to promote collaboration in a more structured format using collaborative P2P online tools that create two-way communication moments to educate and foster conversation. Virtual collaborative workspaces, such as realtime whiteboards like Miro and Mural, make solutioning and strategizing an engaging and collaborative exercise. Tools such as Brainly and Figurel's Medical Case forums stimulate thinking by tapping on the community for knowledge sharing. Even VR can be used to build a space for shared understanding that promotes peer interaction with conversation prompts following.

P2P programs remain a critical tool in education and hint at a future where the paradigm shifts from one-way to two-way learning. Future peer sessions will be more collaborative with built-in solutioning exercises, interactive media designed to foster conversation, and outlets at all stages of the process to create continuous learning opportunities for both the attendees and the facilitator. We are now seeing a shift to a more collaborative P2P approach and the emergence of workshops, train-thetrainer activities, and ideation sessions

red paper



### Conclusion

The post-COVID workplace will require L&D solutions that are engaging, accessible, and able to deliver personalized learning. So how do we get there?

While innovation and adaptability are not new to L&D, swiftly adapting curriculums for hybrid learning may not be mainstream for many organizations; in the rush to adapt to working from home, there may be substantial areas where "good enough for now" solutions early in the pandemic became the new standard. Whether it's implementing innovative technologies, collaborative learning, or dynamic, customizable training, organizations must examine how best to reach learners, by auditing the technology and its impact, as well as engaging users/teams about their experiences so far.

Working from home is likely to continue for many; however, finding ways to implement strategies that offer real-world experiences, personalization, and interactive technology will be key for active learning success. Building on those successes will create a more engaging and resilient system for the years to come.

### **About Red Nucleus**

Red Nucleus is the leading provider of learning solutions for the life sciences industry. We take traditional training approaches like print, e-learning, and workshops to a new level by marrying solid content and elegant design with the latest research-based adult learning methodologies and cutting-edge digital technology to help drive your business objectives.

Learn more at <u>www.rednucleus.com</u>.

