



# How to Know When It's Time to Update Your Training Program

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It's easy to see when the carpet needs replacing in your office. Or to know when it's time to update your computers. Or even when and how to update your employee benefits to appeal to the professionals you most want to hire. But how do you know when it's time to update your training program? Answer these three questions to find out.



### Does Your Training Program Fit How Your Workforce Likes to Learn?

Legacy training programs were heavily classroom-based, with online training to supplement the skills and information covered in class. Today, many companies have a distributed workforce and advanced technology, so more training is delivered via eLearning. Employers often have four (or even five) generations in their workforce, each with preferences for what and how to learn. And, with low unemployment, organizations must find creative ways to attract, train, and retain the talent they need.

Complete this “training program fit” test to see if your organization is keeping up.

- **Blended Learning:** In a world where so many of us turn to Google or YouTube to find immediate answers, employees expect “just in time” learning to do their jobs well. For more complex skills, instructor-led training (in person or online) can provide expert guidance and feedback. Do you have the right mix of blended learning, so your employees can get to tactical answers quickly and have the support they need to master more complicated concepts?
- **Changing Demographics:** Broadly speaking, each generation has its own set of learning preferences. Baby Boomers prefer in-person, classroom training. Generation X likes the flexibility of online learning. Millennials and Generation Z prefer technology-driven learning and often expect engaging video content. Are you catering to the preferences of the generations in your workforce?
- **Internships and Apprenticeships:** Many companies are building out internship, apprenticeship, and “[returnship](#)” programs to help shape the skills new employees need to succeed in their job – and in the workplace. Does your training program include strong internships and apprenticeships?
- **Formal and Informal Training:** In addition to formal classes and courses, contemporary professionals learn from many informal situations. Do you have a learning culture that recognizes and celebrates all kinds of learning? Does your learning management system easily capture formal and informal training?

### Is Your Training Program Aligned With Company Goals?

According to a new [IBM Institute for Business Value \(IBV\) study](#), most CEOs don't believe they have the people, skills, and resources they need to execute their business strategies. Even if the structure of your training program is keeping up with how professionals learn today, you could be missing important opportunities to align your training program with your company goals.



At least annually, check to see if your training program is doing all it can to support your organization's success. Here are just a few examples:

- **Technology Adoption:** It's common for companies to have goals that address keeping employees' technology skills up to date. Certainly, this is true for software developers and other technology professionals. But it should be true for all employees. Do you guide employees to master and utilize the customer relationship management systems, customer service tools, learning management systems, and other technologies important to their jobs?
- **Succession Management:** Smart companies are planning for who will take on leadership roles when their current leaders step down. As part of your training program, are you including leadership training, mentoring, and cross-departmental experiences that support succession planning?
- **Compliance:** If you're in a highly regulated industry such as banking, finance, or energy, industry compliance is core to how you do business. Even if you're not, compliance with workplace safety and human resources regulations always comes down to the behavior of individual employees. Does your training program track learning and certifications related to industry and company compliance requirements?

## Does Your Training Program Build Future Skills?

It's not enough for your training program to address this year's goals. You also need to prepare your workforce to support the organization five years from now. This doesn't (and can't) happen by accident. You need a specific plan and a reliable way to assess where the skills gaps are today – and how employees will close those gaps in the coming months and years.

Here are three elements to consider:

- **Competency-Based Learning:** Competencies take the guesswork out of learning. A competency management system helps you assess the skills, knowledge, and behaviors your employees have today. Then, by identifying the skills people need for the future, competency-based learning plans provide you (and your employees) clear visibility into skill development. To inform recruitment and development activities, apply analytics to analyze and predict your skill supply and demand. Is your training program grounded in competencies?
- **Behavioral Skills:** According to IBM's *The enterprise guide to closing the skills gap* report, digital skills remain vital; however, executives say that soft skills have surpassed them in importance. Companies have been focusing on technical skills, often overlooking some of the basic soft skills that are so important in a business world that constantly changes. Are you including enough behavioral skills in your training program? Are you putting the right emphasis on soft skills?
- **Reskilling and Upskilling:** In the same way that internships and apprenticeships train new employees, reskilling and upskilling initiatives build out new skillsets of current employees, based on business priorities. Are you reskilling and upskilling your employees whose skills are at risk of becoming outdated or obsolete?

If your current training and development programs haven't quite kept up with how (or where) your company is growing, you're not alone. Now is a good time to reevaluate your program to better align it for next year's top priorities and goals.

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