

# Successful Elearning in 4 STEPS

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BY LINDSAY THOMSON | [lynda.com](http://lynda.com)



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WHAT MAKES ELEARNING  
SUCCESSFUL?  
HOW CAN AN ORGANIZATION  
ENSURE THAT SUCCESS?

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# The Case for Elearning

Business leaders increasingly recognize that providing employee training is critical to success. Companies worldwide use instructional content available on demand to build elearning programs that drive positive outcomes.

More than 40 percent of global Fortune 500 companies had embraced elearning strategies in 2013 (Ibis Capital). That same year, elearning was a \$56.2 billion industry. This was expected to more than double by the end of 2015 (Global Industry Analysts).

Tremendous benefits result from elearning—chief among them improving employee performance and productivity, aligning expertise with business objectives, and providing consistent and scalable training to a dispersed workforce.

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THIS GUIDE DESCRIBES FOUR  
STEPS ANY COMPANY CAN  
TAKE TO GET THE MOST FROM  
AN ELEARNING INVESTMENT.

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STEPS

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# 01



## Identify Needs

A “one size fits all” approach to elearning is not sustainable. Each department at your organization should consider its skill gaps and document its training needs. For example, Human Resources may need to improve new hire onboarding while IT needs to keep engineers up to speed with the latest software. Understanding the most critical pain points helps build a business case for elearning.





**Working with department managers, take a few moments to answer these questions:**

### What are the problems?

These could include a need to increase performance and productivity, encourage innovation, create new leaders, or improve employee retention.

### How big are the problems?

Consider how many employees are affected in each department, to what extent productivity suffers, and which projects are incomplete.

### Could elearning be a solution?

If the answer is no, ask why. Is the department unfamiliar with elearning? Without buy-in, elearning is less likely to succeed.

### What are the requirements?

These could include integration with a learning management system (LMS), 24/7 access, detailed reporting. Look for commonalities across teams and departments.

# 02



## Set Goals

With needs identified, you and your team can start creating a plan that exposes the value of elearning and set goals for a future deployment.



To set goals, answer these questions.

### Why are these goals important?

**EXAMPLE:**

Management training would create opportunities to promote employees, which boosts staff retention and reduces time spent on hiring and onboarding.

### Do department objectives align with company goals?

**EXAMPLE:**

Management training in the IT Department is needed as much as it is company wide.

### Do we need a short- or long-term strategy?

**EXAMPLE:**

Several executives are expected to retire in the next five years. A long-term strategy would support succession planning.

### How can we reach our goals?

**EXAMPLE:**

With elearning, we can offer management training anytime and anywhere—making it easily accessible to all eligible employees, who can learn at their own pace.



# 03



## Decide How to Measure Success, Track ROI

Measuring the effectiveness of elearning and tracking the return on investment (ROI) is critical to confirming that goals are met.

Define metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs). Create baselines and milestones. Effective elearning solutions offer detailed reports that track usage, course completions, time spent on the service, and more. Reports can help calculate ROI.





**To ensure success, plan on tracking three key metrics.**

**METRIC NO. 1:**

### **Employee Engagement**

The goal is to evaluate whether training is used. If not, why? The goal is not determining the ultimate effectiveness of training.

This measures interest and commitment, and how often employees use online training.

To measure this, effective solutions provide reports that contain data on user registrations, course progress and completions, the frequency of logins, and more.

**METRIC NO. 2:**

### **Knowledge Acquisition**

The goal is to confirm that learning has occurred.

This measures knowledge, attitudes, skills, or other attributes acquired.

To measure this, effective solutions incorporate assessments that help determine how much critical content an employee learns.

**METRIC NO. 3:**

### **Behavior Change**

The goal is to confirm changes in performance and demonstrate positive ROI.

This measures use of new knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

This is measured through observation, performance benchmarks, project analysis, and feedback from superiors or subordinates. The easiest way to confirm change is to document a deficiency before and its reversal after training. Surveys are great for documenting change.

# 04



## Secure Buy-In

When pitching the introduction or expansion of elearning to decision makers, focus on the value exposed during the goal setting described in Step No. 2. If possible, include ROI estimates.

To build a solid case, recruit an executive team or leader to sponsor and support the project. Also, decide who will drive and manage the project. For example, if IT has the primary need, it might make sense for the vice president of technology to be the executive sponsor. The IT director could be project manager.



To secure buy-in, be prepared to answer these questions.



If your implementation target is three months away, major milestones could include:

	Obtain stakeholder approval, identify sponsors.		Choose an elearning provider.		Start rollout by promoting to employees.		
WEEK 01	WEEK 02	WEEKS 03 – 06		WEEK 07	WEEK 08	WEEKS 09 – 11	WEEK 12
Identify your needs and secure internal buy-in.	Conduct research to find the right elearning vendor. Consider:		Begin implementation including technical analysis and configuration.		Begin measuring success.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content quality, relevance, and shelf life</li> <li>• Instructor authenticity</li> <li>• End user authentication options</li> <li>• Reporting features</li> <li>• Integration options, including LMS compatibility</li> <li>• Cost</li> </ul>						



# Conclusion

Some organizations plunge into elearning without a strategy. This guide can help you and your team create a successful elearning program. For further encouragement, compare courses in the lynda.com online training library with the learning needs of your organization. Talk to executives about the value of online learning, and discuss specific use cases.

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**[Check out a sample email](#) you can use to communicate the effectiveness of elearning to colleagues and executives.**

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Explore a list of departments, examples of skill gaps, and a selection of lynda.com instructional playlists that can help fill those gaps. Because lynda.com provides thousands of courses, this is not a full list.

Department	Challenge / Skills Gap	lynda.com Playlist <small>(click title links to view playlist)</small>
Creative	Need quick tips about design software to speed up project delivery	<a href="#"><u>Use Adobe Illustrator &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Human Resources	Need consistent training for onboarding new hires	<a href="#"><u>Develop Executive Leadership &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Learning & Development	Need to provide management training and staff with professional development opportunities	<a href="#"><u>Developing Others &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Instructional Design	Need tools and skills to create effective elearning programs.	<a href="#"><u>Instructional Design: Learning Design Skills &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Finance	Need to enhance data analysis by mastering Microsoft® Excel®	<a href="#"><u>Analyze Data in Excel &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Information Technology	Need training on migrating to Microsoft® SharePoint® Server 2013	<a href="#"><u>Become a SharePoint 2013 Expert &gt;&gt;</u></a>
Marketing	Need to understand the fundamentals of web analytics using Google Analytics™ and Adobe® Analytics	<a href="#"><u>Learn Web Analytics &gt;&gt;</u></a>



# About the Author

Lindsay Thomson is a marketing specialist at lynda.com focused on providing enterprise learning solutions to academic institutions, businesses, and government agencies. Working in the elearning industry allows Lindsay to share her passion for helping organizations build effective elearning programs that promote lifelong learning.



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