



Insight guide

Five reasons to invest in rapid e-learning: a modest prospectus

The market conditions are ideal for rapid e-learning.

Now's the time to get in on the ground floor.

If you or others in your organisation need convincing, here are five reasons to put your money into rapid e-learning.

Health warning: This does not constitute investment advice. But if it did, it'd be pretty good advice...



1. Drive out cost

Every manager in every business is feeling the crunch impact on their budget.

Those responsible for L&D are probably feeling it more than most. And it's not the training requirement that's getting cut, of course – it's the cost of delivering it. So how, as more than one client has said to us, are we going to do more for less?

First let's compare e-learning to the main alternative investment option, instructor led training:

Instructor led training	E-learning
Cost of trainers every time you run a course	Cost of development upfront but other than maintaining it, no ongoing costs
Travel costs for learners	Travel costs for learners
Printing and distribution costs	No distribution costs if done online
Administration costs: booking rooms, arranging lunch, rebooking when people don't show...	None of that thanks very much

Great, you say, but I'm already spending heavily on e-learning and I've got to make cuts there too. How can rapid e-learning help you deliver more, for less than you're currently spending on e-learning?

Four ways in which rapid e-learning can deliver more for less

1. Lower cost of development

The development cost of rapid e-learning is often less than 50% of that of traditional bespoke e-learning development and like any e-learning, the delivery costs are significantly lower than classroom delivery costs.

2. Increased speed of delivery

Speed is one of the major advantages that rapid e-learning delivers. Most rapid e-learning can be developed and delivered in a fraction of the time that bespoke e-learning or classroom based e-learning can be developed and deployed. Shorter projects mean lower internal costs for SMEs, project managers and reviewers.

3. Lower ongoing maintenance cost

Rapid development tools and their ease of use mean that internal staff can update content quickly and cost-effectively without having to go back to the vendor. Unlike generic e-learning content licences there are no ongoing licence fees.

4. Less paper, more product

Traditional e-learning borrows process from linear software engineering, with lots of project initiation, design solution and specification documents before you ever see something. Rapid e-learning moves quickly to prototypes, usually in a matter of days. This cuts out a lot of the time and cost that comes with heavy documentation, when a lighter touch gets you to the solution quicker.



2. Accelerate performance

Cutting training costs may be at the top of the agenda, but if it's at the expense of your learners' performance, then it's a false economy. More than ever, you need your people performing to their best. For rapid e-learning to be an attractive investment proposition, it needs to show that it can deliver performance levels as good as, if not better than, the alternatives.

Rapid e-learning delivers here too:

Better learning experience: Brandon Hall research showed that learner performance was enhanced through e-learning compared to classroom methods in terms of:

- learners' attitudes toward the e-learning format and training in general
- learners' scores on tests, certifications or other evaluations
- the number of learners who achieve 'mastery' level and / or 'pass' exams
- learners' ability to apply new knowledge or processes on the job
- long-term retention of information

There when you need it: Rapid e-learning can make it to the point of need faster than face to face and traditional e-learning solutions, information at the point of need when the learner needs it. What's going to aid performance more, waiting for an instructor led session on a specific process or challenge, or e-learning available right when the learner needs to up their game?

More efficient for learners: E-learning takes less time than classroom alternatives as:

- Learners can go at their own pace, not at the pace of the slowest member of a group
- Time in classrooms can be spent on questions / topics introduced by other delegates that are irrelevant to the needs of the individual learner
- There is less social interaction time
- It takes less time to start and wind up a learning session
- There is less travel time to and from a training event
- Learners learn what they need to learn, they can skip elements of a programme they don't need



3. Get the job done faster

Organisations are looking for a more agile approach to providing training solutions. Timeframes are shortening with business areas looking to support new product launches, compliance requirements, and reorganisation plans with effective learning – and the emphasis is on time.

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Here's where rapid e-learning rises to the challenge. What do you say to the business request that we need training on a new set of products, ready and rolled out in 2 weeks? With rapid e-learning, you can do your best Barack Obama impression and cry: "Yes we can".

How? Here's how a typical rapid e-learning timeline might look, based on real experience in a 10 day timeline:

Day 1 am: Client provides brief and some source materials

Day 1 pm: Kineo designer reviews and sets design structure in PowerPoint

Day 2-3: SME works content into PowerPoint design structure

Day 3 pm: Kineo designer reviews, calls SME with clarifying questions.

Day 4: Designer builds first version into tool without graphics (note – no script, straight to build).

Day 5: Designer has review call with SME to look at first version online

Designer makes changes while on call, editing, changing screen types

Day 5-6: Graphic artist works on graphics/animations, designer integrates them

Day 7: Designer has second call with client to review graphics in build. Some more edits to templates.

Day 8: Testing of client release version for final proofing, edits, links

Day 9: Released (with more iterations planned based on user feedback)

By working in this way, you can be a hero to your business customers, beating expectations on delivery and keeping costs down as short focused projects don't suffer from big cost overruns. Compare it to how long you might take to organise a series of instructor led sessions, and the ongoing effort to manage and run them, and there's no comparison. It's a time for agile responses that do just what they need to.

More agile: Rapid e-learning is more of a precision weapon than classroom training. Whereas classroom training is typically designed in blocks of days, e-learning is much shorter and more focused. Effective scoping and analysis which focuses in on two or three key challenges, or commonly made mistakes, can deliver a short effective 10 or 20-minute module which can make an immediate impact. Kineo's rapid approach means that most of our e-learning is delivered in a matter of weeks.



4. Reach the niche

At a time when many organisations are cutting back and teams become more lean, the reality is that audience sizes for many training requirements may be falling. That doesn't have to rule e-learning out.

It's a well-worn statement that e-learning only really works on scale, for audience sizes less than 500 it's not going to present a good business case compared to other investment options. That's probably true when you're working with a traditional e-learning cost base.

Rapid e-learning however has a much lower upfront investment cost, and much of the effort can be taken on in-house with the right support and tools.

A much lower cost per hour means the cost barrier is removed. You can now look at quite small, niche areas in the business and consider e-learning as a solution.

As one Kineo client put it: "The use of rapid development tools mean that I can say 'Yes' to customers I may have had to say 'No' to in the past due to the time, money and effort required to develop material in the traditional way. We can now cater for many smaller audiences, tighter deadlines or slimmer budgets (sometimes no budget!) without losing the impact and quality that a more traditional development model can offer."

Industry expert Clive Shepherd has drawn a good analogy using the concept of the long tail. He points out that the 'big ticket' projects that require a significant investment are actually worth less in total value than the many smaller, more niche opportunities that exist in specialised areas in business. So think of rapid e-learning as a niche player on a grand scale, tapping into those thousands of opportunities that might lie below the radar and were previously considered out of e-learning's reach.



5. Reduce your carbon footprint

E-learning's one of the more carbon neutral investment options out there for the discerning investor.

A study by the Open University, "Towards Sustainable Higher Education: Environmental Impacts of Campus-Based and Distance Higher Education Systems," found that on average, the production and provision of distance learning courses consumed nearly 90 percent less energy and produced 85 percent fewer CO2 emissions per student than conventional campus-based university courses. The main savings were due to a reduction in the amount of student travel, economies of scale in the use of the campus site, and the elimination of much of the energy consumption of students' housing. In other words, studying from home and using a home computer was far more energy efficient.

The Open University study examined in detail energy costs associated with classroom learning in terms of CO2 emissions, and compared these to the costs of learning via a computer. Computers are no environmental saints: They burn energy at least 0.125 kwh per hour for a desktop PC, and can contain toxic materials such as lead, cadmium, and PCB's that pose serious health and environmental hazards. Despite this, the CO2 emission levels associated with computer use were significantly less than those associated with more conventional instructional delivery methods, and much of the studying was done from home using computers that students already owned.

Let's not forget the paper savings: Many e-learning courses are entirely self-contained, presenting all learning content online, or providing alternatives to paper-based forms of communication through such tools as email, PDF manuals, synchronous classrooms, and other web-based tools.

Rapid e-learning: Your opportunity

You've heard the sales pitch. If you want to buy into a niche player with the potential to operate on a grand scale, to deliver faster, more effectively and at significantly lower cost, your best investment option right now could well be rapid e-learning.

Our lawyers kindly ask that we point out: this is not investment advice of course. Your investment might fall as well as rise. Rapid e-learning needs careful planning, clear process, and design and development expertise to generate real returns.

Contact Kineo to find out how you can ensure the best returns from your rapid e-learning investment

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