

# AchieveGlobal Survey Analysis: Learning in Difficult Times

During challenging economic times, employee learning and development initiatives have traditionally been one of the first items singled out to meet their fate on the budgetary chopping block – often categorized as a “nice to have” rather than a “need to have.”

Though it’s long been touted by those in the field as a strategy rather than a response – an investment rather than an expense – buy-in has been a long time coming.

Despite myriad arguments to the contrary, employee training and development has historically been viewed as a luxury. And we all know what happens to luxury items in a challenging economy.

## Challenging Economy? Check.

AchieveGlobal decided to use the current economy as a litmus test to see how learning and development initiatives are faring in the face of stinging cutbacks and budgetary belt-tightening.

In early 2009, we asked respondents from a variety of industries, company sizes and positions how their companies’ learning initiatives are being affected. Going by what we know to be true about the general value perception of training during difficult times, we were pleasantly surprised with the results.

Most compelling? The notion of employee training and development as a long-term strategy rather than a short-term fix is finally catching on.

In fact, 51% of respondents report that their company’s level of investment and focus on employee learning and development has either increased or stayed the same in the face of current economic conditions. That despite 85% of those same respondents reporting that their organization has experienced a moderate to severe impact as a result of the recession.



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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the level of human skills will determine organization success. AchieveGlobal provides exceptional development in interpersonal business skills, giving companies the workforce they need for business results. Located in over 40 countries, we offer multi-language, learning-based solutions—globally, regionally, and locally.

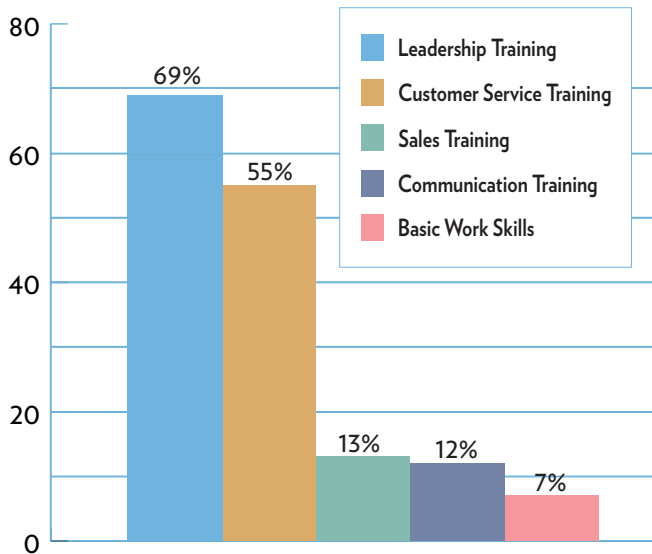
We understand the competition you face. Your success depends on people who have the skills to handle the challenges beyond the reach of technology. We’re experts in developing these skills, and it’s these skills that turn your strategies into business success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

These are things technology can’t do. Think. Learn. Solve problems. Listen. Motivate. Explain. People with these skills have a bright future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. AchieveGlobal prepares you for that world.



Developing the 21st  
century workforce™

## Learning & Development Areas Receiving Additional Investment & Focus



### Learning to Lead

Considering the daunting and relentless challenges they face from all sides these days, it should come as no surprise that many organizations are working hard to equip their leaders with the skills and strategies necessary to rally their troops during these trying times.

In fact, of organizations in our survey that are maintaining or increasing their focus on learning and development, nearly 70% say leadership training is at the top of their list.

Customer service training also has experienced a substantial boost, with 55% of respondents reporting additional resources being aimed at that area. Sales, communication and basic work skills training round out the top five.

### Knee-Jerk No More

By all indications, employee learning and development is closer than ever to earning its rightful place as a “must have” rather than a “nice to have” in organizations nationwide. Our survey confirms that training today is used not so much to solve short-term problems as it is to create long-term opportunities. Employee development is viewed more as a strategic investment than a tactical response.

Cause for celebration? You bet – for employees, their leaders, organizations and the customers they serve. Because

although cuts in training expenditures often have the desired short-term effect (saving money), the long-term consequences are another story altogether. Higher employee turnover, lower revenues, less motivated employees, decreased productivity and sinking morale all can be tied to cutbacks in employee training and development. Customer loyalty and satisfaction takes a direct hit from there, and a tailspin ensues.

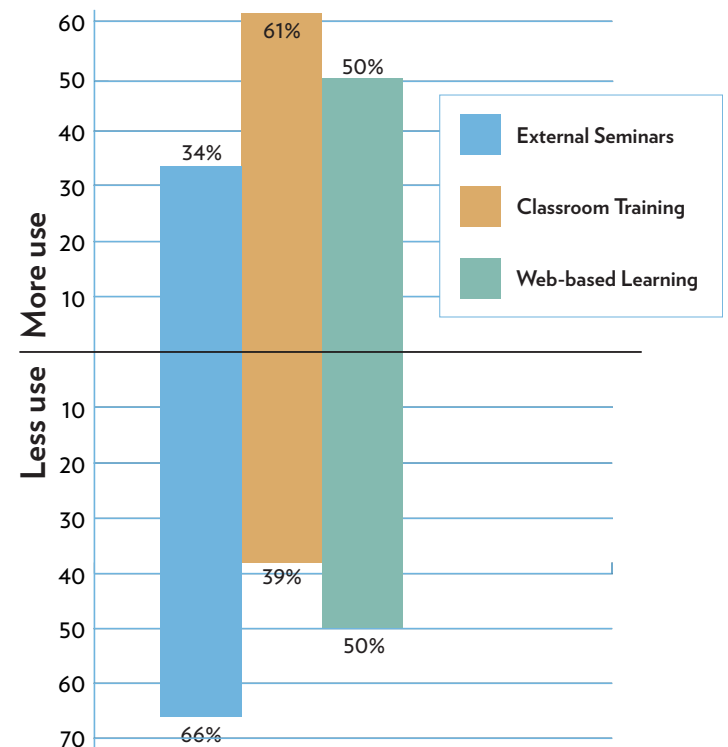
### Mixing It Up

While it might be true that more organizations than not have settled on a strategic, long-term approach to employee learning and development, how that training is delivered is another subject entirely.

With delivery systems such as e-learning, CD-ROM-based training, team meetings, videoconferencing, textbooks, games, seminars and even social networking jockeying for position alongside traditional classroom training, organizations are learning through trial and error how to get the most bang for their development dollar buck.

According to our survey respondents, external seminars, conferences and business school workshops are going to

## Predicted Use of Training Methods in the Upcoming Year



take the biggest hit in the coming year – with a whopping 66% saying their company will use these vehicles less than in the past. It's a good bet that the desire to eliminate associated costs such as travel, lodging and time away from the office has a lot to do with the decrease.

Classroom training is a distant second, with 39% reporting a decrease in their usage of this traditional delivery system. It's interesting to note that in contrast to the 39% reporting a decrease in classroom training, 61% of respondents report their use of this type of training will either increase (17%) or stay the same (44%).

Training delivery systems that are expected to experience a 50% or better increase in usage at our respondents' companies in the coming year include Web-based e-learning, Web-based training such as LiveMeeting and Webex, conference calls and mentoring/coaching.

The common denominator? All four of these training methods are informal, focused and require little if any time away from work or the office. Training can be dispensed to those who need it quickly and relatively inexpensively, and employees can apply what they learned almost instantly – garnering real ROI for the organization.

## E-learning On The Rise

After weathering years of predictable hits and misses while working to establish Web-based learning as a viable training method, the scales are unquestionably tipping in favor of making this training delivery method a mainstay in progressive organizations nationwide.

With 85% of our survey respondents anticipating that their company's use of Web-based training will either stay the same or increase in the coming year and 87% predicting the same for Web-based e-learning, it's safe to say that a trend is emerging. It's worth noting that respondents say these two training delivery systems are second only to informal,

free and often transparent training such as learning through trial and error, coaching and mentoring.

What types of e-learning are anticipated to stand out in the popularity polls? According to our survey respondents, individual training modules will see a 56% increase in usage; collaboration tools such as wikis, threaded discussions and shared documents will experience a 45% increase; training via social networking sites will see a 33% increase; and e-learning games and simulations are poised for a 31% increase.

## The Strategic Take-Away

The results of our survey are encouraging on many fronts. Whether you view learning and development as an employee retention strategy, a customer retention strategy or as an overall survival strategy to position your organization for both short- and long-term success, one thing is becoming perfectly clear: Equipping employees with the skills to do their jobs well is indeed a *strategy*.

How that strategy plays out is up to each individual organization. The different types of training and the many ways that training can be delivered present numerous options and opportunities. The key is to find a blend that works in your organization.

The bottom line is this: Organizations invest in training to develop the skills and abilities necessary to meet organizational and customer needs both now and in the future. Cutting or altogether eliminating that investment impedes your ability to prepare for and compete tomorrow.

And just to be clear: Planning to play catch-up when the economy turns around and there's "extra" money in the coffer is an idea based on short-sighted goals rather than long-term strategic planning. Truth is, it doesn't work. Slow and steady, as the saying goes, always wins the race.



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