Using MOOCs to transform traditional training

The role of MOOCs in corporate training programmes

This report has been written by Towards Maturity, building on its extensive benchmark research since 2003 with over 2,900 organisations.

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May 2014

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Foreword by Mark Martin, IMC

Welcome to this whitepaper on what I am sure will prove to be a very exciting development for corporate learning. Although the use of MOOCs up until now has been almost universally confined to education establishments, it is interesting to see their increasing use in other contexts, particularly for compliance and product training within the corporate world.

This is an exciting development as, like many, I feel that there is a strong desire to transform the way that corporate learning is delivered. At IMC Learning we have seen at first-hand how organisations have used MOOCs to offer more innovative, flexible and scalable learning programmes that meet the needs of today’s time-pressured, demanding and digital-savvy learner.

This report focuses on what we have learnt so far from our experience of MOOC development and provides some practical guidance on how to take advantage of this new approach to learning. We hope you enjoy the report and would welcome the opportunity to discuss MOOCs or any of the other IMC Learning products and services with you.

Mark Martin

Managing Director, IMC (UK) Learning Ltd.
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Summary

The Towards Maturity New Learning Agenda shows that whilst formal learning programmes in the workplace are certainly not redundant, there is a need to transform the way that they are delivered.

We know that 20% of all formal learning is e-enabled, rising to 57% of all compliance training.

From the corporate learner perspective, 3 in 5 value formal learning but 88% are looking for flexibility in the time and pace of learning. Restructuring formal education in the workplace now demands new approaches, new partnerships and making use of new technologies.

The low cost, agile and scalable nature of cloud-based MOOC platforms has taken higher education by storm. But do they have a potential role to play in transforming corporate learning providing inexpensive standardised training for specific tasks, for example, to take the risk out of hiring/recruitment?

This In Focus Report draws on data from the top performance corporate learning organisations in the 2013 Towards Maturity Benchmark in order to explore what aspects of MOOC learning design can be applied effectively to learning in the corporate world to support the demands of today’s learners.

Key facts from this report

About MOOCs in corporate learning:

- 8% of organisations are using MOOCs now and a further 7% would consider that they are just experimenting with them. In the next two years this is forecast to rise to 28%
- Uptake is highest in the public sector with 42% using MOOCs
- 20% of all formal learning is e-enabled, rising to 57% of all compliance training, but completion rates are low at only 68%.

About learners:

- 20% of learners are studying independently online
- 88% like to be able to learn at their own pace

Six lessons that corporate L&D can learn from MOOC design include:

- Create a framework for self-paced learning
  - 75% of learners report that they are happy to engage with online learning without prompting
  - Currently only 15% of corporate learning has strategies for content curation in place to support learners’ own use of online resources
- Design great learning experiences
  - Just 55% of organisations are incorporating all the media at their disposal to make the ‘e-learning course’ more interesting, including images, video, audio and animations
• Support peer collaboration using social media
  o Only 18% of organisations encourage learners to connect and share knowledge and only 15% encourage them to collaborate in building knowledge resources, using tools such as wikis, forums, podcasts and videos - features common to many MOOCs

• Use online assessment effectively to support transfer of learning back into the workplace
  o Currently only 14% of corporate learning use defined performance support practices to support learning transfer after formal training

• Scale up learning
  o 88% of organisations have invested heavily in their own LMS which they are using to store, deliver and track e-learning courses, but currently only 21% integrate this with external content such as video libraries

• Drive engagement
  o Currently only 44% of corporate learning have communication plans in place for all key stakeholders

Top learning companies are twice as likely to be applying these lessons and are delivering greater benefits as a result. When compared with the average, top learning companies are more than twice as likely to report that:

• Staff put what they learn into practice quickly
• They have noticed positive changes in staff behaviour and
• They provide a faster response to changing business conditions

Corporate learning is beginning to embrace the concept of MOOCs. On the one hand, they can access a wealth of free, quality content and are realising the extent to which their staff are engaging in online CPD independently. On the other hand, they are beginning to understand the benefits of making their corporate learning freely available to the extended enterprise.

Learning innovation, done well, is impacting bottom line business results.

These are just some of the statistics that caught our eye from this In Focus Report. Connect with us on Twitter using #bethebest14 to let us know what’s captured your attention! @towardsmaturity
Introduction: Transforming traditional training

Learners are looking for the best of both worlds. The 2013 Learning Landscape research from Towards Maturity with over 2,000 learners¹ shows that three out of five learners find value in attending classroom-based courses but 88% want to study at their own pace. This means thinking differently about how formal learning is designed.

In the Towards Maturity 2013-14 Benchmark report: New Learning Agenda: Talent: Technology: Change², analysis of data from over 500 organisations revealed that 26% of overall formal learning is currently e-enabled, rising to an average of 57% for mandatory training for compliance in the legislative or regulatory environment.

In the New Learning Agenda² we argue the need to transform traditional training to meet the needs of busy employees. Transformation is particularly needed in compliance training, which can bring out the very best – and the very worst in corporate training!

Technology provides an opportunity to bring formal learning to the masses but in the process many are in danger of dumbing down a great learning experience. So what can the corporate sector learn from Higher Education who specialise in delivering traditional training and are now forging ahead with delivering learning through the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)?

Exploring the MOOC model

MOOCs are increasingly becoming a part of the corporate training landscape, having been in use for a number of years in the Higher Education sector. MOOCs offer corporate L&D opportunities for scalability and learner management that are well worth investigating, particularly for meeting compliance needs or skills in high demand. They also create an opportunity to offer a multitude of online courses that touch on areas they would otherwise have to invest their budget in.

What is a MOOC?

A MOOC is a model for open online content that can be taken by anyone – with no fixed dates, no enrolment criteria and no limit on participation. The first MOOC was set up by Stephen Downes and George Siemens at the University of Manitoba in 2008.

cMOOCs – connectivist or collectivist MOOCs – are a more open platform. Learners set their own learning goals and type of engagement and won’t necessarily acquire a fixed and tested set of specific skills, knowledge or competences. Participants actively contribute through blogs, wikis and social networks and build supportive learning communities.

xMOOC – instructivist MOOCs. The centre of the course is the online instructor-guided lesson. Learners follow a linear path through the course, based on acquisition of a set of fixed competencies.

See Mira Vogel (2014) ‘Collaborative learning through MOOCs and social development’ for further comparison.

¹ The Learner Voice (www.towardsmaturity.org/learnervoice1)
² www.towardsmaturity.org/2013benchmark

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What are the features of MOOCs?

- **Massive**
  - Reaching distant or disadvantaged learners to provide:
    - Continuing and informal education in the developed world
    - Access to highly trained educators to the developing world

- **Open**
  - Open access – allowing any place – any device but not always any time (often fixed start/end dates with slow down/speed up options)
  - Open participation – not necessarily free to target community (although levels of engagement increase with course fee charged). Learners pay for assessment/certification – not for learning
  - Open enrolment – no specific entry requirements are set

- **Online**
  - Crossing cultural barriers – learners are collaborating with tutors/peers in other workplaces
  - Resource-full – integrating the maze of external resources with internal platforms
  - Collaborative – actively encouraging learners to participate in learning communities

- **Courses**
  - Taster courses – provide opportunities for personal career development
  - CPD – individuals can study for their own interest or to advance their career
  - All levels – addressing the increasing demand for affordable higher level study

Who is using MOOCs?

Towards Maturity started to explore the use of MOOCs in corporate learning in 2013 and found that 8% of organisations are using MOOCs now and a further 7% would consider that they are just experimenting with them. In the next two years this is forecast to rise to 28%, making this one of the fastest growing innovations in learning delivery enabled by technology. Take-up varies between sectors and industries with the highest adoption in the public sector:

- 42% Public sector
- 26% Private sector
- 18% Not-for-profit sector

MOOCs also provide plenty of opportunity for staff to engage with learning directly and there is clearly a willingness to do that. Data from over 2,000 learners gathered in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape study during 2013\(^3\) shows that 20% of learners are now studying on their own outside work. This tends to be higher for those in senior management roles and for those starting out in their career. Continuing professional development (CPD) forms the major part of this usage and 70% of learners can see how online learning opportunities can help them in their career.

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\(^3\) www.towardsmaturity.org/learner

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Issues and considerations

There has been a lot of hype around MOOCs – expectations are high, but they are not delivering high pass or completion rates. In 2012, Coursera\(^4\) estimated that out of an average enrolment of 40-60,000 students, only 5% reached the end of the course. This in itself is not a problem: in this example, that is still 3,000 learners going through the course. In 2014, Katy Jordan\(^5\), found the average MOOC course enrols 43,000 students of whom 6.5% complete the course. However, without an understanding of the learners’ motives for undertaking the course, low completion rates do not necessarily mean that learner goals have not been met. Completion rates are critical for compliance training, so improving individual motivation and aligning learner goals to organisational objectives are key success factors.

In the MOOC model, frequent quizzes and interactive exercises are used to test understanding – a pattern we see repeated in much compliance-related content. The need to ensure not only understanding, but also the application of learning sets a different challenge for L&D. Peer-to-peer online discussion, shared reflective logs and work-based assignments that need to be reported back to the MOOC community can all help.

Online assessment can simplify the certification or accreditation process, provided the learner can be authenticated and robust quality assurance processes are in place. Credentials, open badges or leaderboards – all

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\(^4\) The MOOC Retention Problem (http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/retention-and-intention-massive-open-online-courses-depth-0)

techniques associated with MOOCs – can help learner motivation and retention.

Perhaps because much of the MOOC content is freely available, development costs are kept low and there are many examples of courses that are little more than e-page turning that have given e-learning bad press.

‘Poor quality e-learning is just a tick-box exercise mainly for compliance. It should be called eReading as employees do not learn from it and do not retain information long enough to apply in the business.’

Providing an inspiring experience and enhancing perceived value in the programme means focusing far more on course design when large numbers of learners are involved.

There are equally many examples of inspiring, exciting compliance content that illustrate how to drive up learner engagement (see references list on page 25 for examples).

**Transforming compliance-related training**

Four out of five companies are offering training in industry-specific skills to meet regulatory requirements – particularly in heavily regulated sectors like finance and insurance (96%) and health (92%). Yet despite the obvious benefits that technology can offer in terms of tracking learners, facilitating online learning communities and assessment, only 57% of this training is e-enabled.

Completion rates in compliance training generally give cause for concern, and on average only 68% of compliance programmes are completed. The average figure disguises the fact that:

- Just over one-quarter (27%) of the 2013 Benchmark sample report completion rates of over 90%
- Another quarter (26%) report completion rates below 50% - under half of the learners that were required to take the course!

**What can we learn from top learning companies?**

Over the last ten years Towards Maturity has analysed the behaviour of the most successful L&D departments and the impact they are having on their organisation. Those that are achieving the best results are doing things differently from the rest.

These behaviours are described in the **Towards Maturity Model**.

The six workstreams of effective practice in the model are used to compile the **Towards Maturity Index (TMI)**. Those in the top quartile for the TMI are reported here as the ‘top learning companies’.
Top learning companies are consistently reporting better alignment to need, better engagement and demonstrating greater value back to the business.

When compared with average, top learning companies are more than twice as likely to report that:

- Staff put what they learn into practice quickly
- They have noticed positive changes in staff behaviour and
- They provide a faster response to changing business conditions

All these are areas that are direct aims of much organisational training for compliance purposes.

Top learning companies also report 40% improvement in their efficiency in demonstrating compliance (compared to an average across the sample of 30%).

By analysing what top learning companies are doing differently, and looking at the application of the best of MOOC models, we can provide pointers for L&D to transform traditional compliance training.

**Six lessons for corporate L&D**

**What lessons can we learn from the design of the very best of MOOCs to deliver the very best of compliance training?**

Restructuring formal education in the workplace demands new approaches, new partnerships and making use of new technologies.

The low cost, agile and scalable nature of cloud-based MOOC platforms means that they can start to replace the traditional LMS. Although MOOCs can be tricky to assess or certify, they can provide inexpensive standardised training for specific tasks, for example, to take the risk out of hiring/recruitment.

On the following pages we look at six lessons that corporate L&D can learn from MOOCs.

1. Create a framework for self-paced learning
2. Design great learning experiences
3. Support peer collaboration using social media
4. Use online assessment effectively to support transfer of learning back into the workplace
5. Scale-up learning
6. Drive engagement

We also look at how organisations are embracing MOOCs in the corporate setting.

In each lesson, we consider why it is important, explore the research evidence and identify the steps L&D can take to accelerate progress. Case studies are used to illustrate the lessons and hints and tips are provided to stimulate ideas and discussion.
Lesson 1: Create a framework for self-paced learning

Despite recent innovations in learning design moving away from a structured course format, the age of the online course is far from dead. Indeed, data from over 2,000 learners gathered in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape\(^1\) study during 2013 reveals that 51% find self-paced e-learning courses essential or very useful.

Learners like the flexibility that technology can offer. 88% like to be able to learn at their own pace and technology is enabling 82% to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

Many learners however, do not know what resources are available to them with one-third unable to find what they need. Top learning companies are more likely to have content curation strategies in place (29% vs. 15% overall) to support the learner.

‘In the next two years we plan to be developing a fully self-directed learning network.’

75% of learners report that they are happy to engage with online learning without prompting, although those in L&D feel that in practice, learners need much more hand-holding and direction, with only 18% agreeing that their learners will engage in e-learning courses without prompting.

Creating a framework for self-paced learning

Step 1: Creating the course structure

- Is the content divided into brain-friendly knowledge units with topic overviews?
- Are there assessments after every module?
- Can learners dip in and out of modules in their chosen sequence?
- Can learners personalise their view of the learning environment?
- Are the goals clear at each stage, with roadmaps for each week?
- Is the course well described and easy to find?
- Does the opening video set expectations?
- Is there a learner orientation session to show how to get the most from the MOOC experience, connect with each other and gain familiarity with the platform?

Step 2: Setting the timetable

- Can learners follow the course in their own time or start late?
- Can learners follow the course on any device?
- Do you use visuals to communicate timelines up front?
- Do course assignments need to be submitted in a certain order, or by a certain date?
- Do you use badges to recognise that each stage of the journey is complete?

Step 3: What support is available to learners

- Are any course pre-requisites clear?
- What resources to enhance the learning are available online/offline?
- What preparation is offered for tests or exams?
- How does assignment feedback influence the route through the course?
- What job aids to support application of learning are available?
- Will the learners be part of an active learning community?
The MOOC Platform

While most of the attention on MOOC development inevitably goes on the design of the content, this means that many organisations overlook the learning management system.

A robust, flexible and scalable platform is an essential component of a MOOC. It doesn’t matter how good the content is, the whole MOOC will fail if the platform is not up-to-scratch.

As well as allowing learners to register and access the courses in a straightforward manner, the LMS must also be able to track and record on learner progress and deliver the necessary certification on completion of each module.

Let’s look at other key components of an LMS designed for delivery of MOOCs:

- **Scalable**: MOOCs operate on a large scale reaching a wide and diverse audience. The LMS must be able to meet the needs of a large, global audience and support different media and content types.

- **Mobile conformant**: A platform that supports mobile learning allows learners to be able to access the MOOC where and when they want, in other words, making the MOOC truly ‘open’.

- **Assessment engine**: Assessments are a vital part of a MOOC, ensuring that the learners achieve the necessary standard for accreditation/certification. The LMS should be able to support assessments that provoke reasoning and problem solving skills, enhance communications and encourage application of new-found skills and knowledge.

- **Collaborative tools**: The use of collaborative tools and environments such as blogs, wikis and social media helps learners to reflect on points of learning and build supportive learning communities.
Lesson 2. Design great learning experiences

45% of learners in the Towards Maturity 2013 Learning Landscape reported that uninspiring learning content was a major barrier to them learning online. L&D recognise this is a problem too, and in the 2013 Benchmark, almost half bemoan the lack of availability of attractive, high-quality, learning and one-third think that learning materials lack credibility. However, out of a list of eight barriers relating to learning content and design, top learning companies are reporting significantly fewer barriers.

MOOCs are using some great design techniques to build inspiring content which can help in other learning contexts too:

- Learning based on exercises or mental challenges
- Using collaborative tools – peer review and group collaboration both before, during and after the course (39% in the 2013 Benchmark encourage peer-to-peer feedback)
- Blog posts and threaded discussion
- Use of video (41% use internal best practice video; 52% use external best practice video)
- Use of storytelling techniques (30% use storytelling in their design)
- Inclusion of game-based elements (leaderboards, levels, exciting graphic design, interactivity)
- Preliminary self-assessment (survey and video) (11% use electronic diagnostic tools to help tailor learning to individual needs)
- Linking content through RSS feeds

Good design can make the learner learn faster and more efficiently. Theories abound\(^6\), but great learning experiences take Merrill’s principles\(^7\) into account and focus on the learner and their needs, rather than on conveying information.

Clearly, not all MOOCs have got their design right yet. MOOC designers can learn from the best of internal corporate training. For example, 88% of top learning companies are incorporating all the media at their disposal to make the ‘e-learning course’ more interesting, including images, video, audio and animations, compared to 55% across the sample as a whole. 85% of top learning companies are using best practice videos (compared to 60% sample average). They are also more than twice as likely to use highly interactive methods, such as games and simulation. They use storytelling techniques and create scenarios which allow the learner to practise solving problems and making decisions.

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\(^6\) [http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/learning/learning.html]

\(^7\) E.g. [http://web.cortland.edu/frieda/id/IDtheories/44.html], [http://www.slideshare.net/jessy23r/first-principles-of-instruction-david-merrill]

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Designing recipient-oriented video content

‘I want to use podcasts, webexs and develop stimulating, interactive e-learning packages.’

Which format for which purpose?

• **Videos:** Teaser, instruction, knowledge transfer (visual examples)
• **Scripts:** Knowledge transfer (detailed information about the topic; relevant for exam preparation)
• **Animated Content:** Knowledge transfer (visualize complex scenarios)
• **Homework:** Self-assessment, case studies, engagement
• **Tests:** Automated assessment (mandatory for concluding the course)

Ideal video length (7-10 minutes)

1. Welcome (full shot speaker)
   • Introduce yourself
   • Explain what the module is about
2. Illuminate key aspects (1/2 or full shot of content)
   • Develop explanations → Explain by handwriting, pictures, diagrams
   • Illustrate theory with interesting examples → compare with everyday life situations
   • Use contrasting cases → side by side examples
3. Add interactivity
   • Ask questions before giving answers → pause the speech and resume
4. Conclusion / Goodbye (full shot)
   • Summary
   • Introduction to exercises and other learning objects in the module

What to consider when giving a speech in a MOOC video:

• **Practice your speech** to be able to keep it short and narrow the topic down to the most important aspects
• **Relax and smile** to avoid looking ‘robotic’
• **Look directly into the camera**
• **Address the individual learner directly** to give each of them the impression, that they receive a one-on-one training
• **Pay attention to your body language:** just a little movement; enhance decisive statements with your hands; while standing avoid the typical rocking back and forth; while sitting sit tall and lean just slightly forward
• **Take your time:** wait a few seconds after pushing record before you start talking to facilitate the postproduction
• **Record yourself multiple times** and watch it afterwards to see what works best!

Provided by IMC
Using video in MOOC course content

Whiteboard videos

Interviews

Slides and screencast with voiceover

Speaker and slides

Estimate:
One hour of finalised film material → about ten hours of work from scripting, preparation and production to deployment on the platform.

- Use always the mp4 format
- Use H264 as video and AAC as audio codec
- Provide a HD quality version for high bandwidth users with 1280x1024px (4:3 aspect ratio) or 1280x720 pixels (16:9 aspect ratio)
- Only downscale your videos, do not upscale them

Provided by IMC
Lesson 3. Support peer collaboration using social media

Learners in the workplace are often more influenced by each other than by the L&D professionals, especially when it comes to encouraging them to learn online. 16% of learners that took part in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape in 2013 say that it is the opinion of work colleagues that will most likely encourage them to learn online, compared with just 6% citing members of L&D. Peer collaboration is difficult to achieve in a large diverse audience, but MOOC providers strive to create networking opportunities and encourage learners to build an emotional connection to their peers.

So how can social media support every stage in the corporate learning process?

For course search and selection:
In one group of 1,100 learners from a large private sector organisation, 89% supported the introduction of a star rating system to rate the quality and impact of learning for other users:

- 20% use social media to find out what others think about a course
- 14% use social media to tell others what they think about a course
- 27% value the recommendations for courses from others that they see on social networks

For supporting course content:
Top learning companies are more than twice as likely to encourage learners to connect and share knowledge (45% vs. 18%) and to collaborate in building knowledge resources, using tools such as wikis, forums, podcasts and videos (36% vs. 15%) - a feature common with many MOOCs.

Making learning social:
65% of learners are motivated by technologies that allow them to network and learn with others. Top learning companies are three times more likely to encourage learners to share experiences and solve problems using online social media tools than average (45% vs. 14%).

Encouraging reflection:
71% of top learning companies encourage peer-to-peer feedback about the impact of learning (compared with 39% across the 2013 Benchmark as a whole). They are also more likely to use collaborative tools and environments such as blogs and wikis to reflect on points of learning.

Table 1 Use of collaborative media

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013 Benchmark average</th>
<th>Top learning companies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning communities</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External social media sites</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-house social media</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lesson 4. Use online assessment effectively

Assessment should not be an end in itself. The self-directed learner brings personal skills, knowledge and attitudes to the assessment process and can demonstrate skills as well as writing about them or answering questions about them. Assessment should provoke reasoning and problem solving skills, enhance communications and encourage application of new-found skills and knowledge in the workflow. Effective assessment becomes part of the learning process, particularly when learners critically reflect on their experience and feedback is used constructively to support transfer of learning back into the workplace.

It is therefore surprising that online assessment is not more widely used in compliance training. Although 63% overall are using online assessment to support certification or qualifications, just 55% of organisations using online assessment to help prove compliance (rising to 78% in top learning companies).

Whilst many organisations routinely gather feedback from learners on the extent to which learning points have been understood, top learning companies are clearly using some of the assessment techniques employed in MOOCs – they are twice as likely as average to consider the extent to which learning points have actually been applied at work and to gather feedback from line managers.

Table 2 Effective online assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage agreeing with each statement</th>
<th>2013 Benchmark average</th>
<th>Top learning companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning technologies allow us to simulate the work environment for assessment</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We use defined performance support practices to support learning transfer after formal training</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We use learning technologies to simplify the administration of the assessment process</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson 5. Scale up learning

MOOCs operate on a large scale reaching a wide and diverse audience. ‘Build once – use often’ is also a model that many sector-wide and global organisations are adopting through learning academies. How do they succeed in scaling up the reach and volume of learning whilst remaining suitably efficient and practical?

Towards Maturity has tracked the barriers to implementation of technology-enabled learning over the last ten years, and for the first time, cost of set-up, development and maintenance of e-content has risen to the top of the list – reported by 71% of participants. On average, companies are spending £6-£7,000 on each hour of e-learning content – with many spending considerably more on professionally produced highly interactive and engaging content. From a purely financial standpoint, the MOOC model of using open online content across a wide audience makes sense.

Top learning companies are increasing the reach and volume of learning by 18% as a result of technology. 41% of them are reaching new types of learner too (compared with just 18% on average). Their learners can access clear information on learning opportunities available to them, choose to access learning at any time and at places convenient to them and foster learning for everyone – not just the new starters. They also enable learners to self select from a broad range of technology enabled learning initiatives.

In top learning companies, 64% are paying for external information repositories / learning portals and 57% are using free online learning resources. They are also more than twice as likely to be curating them to help staff make sense of the resources available to them online.

The sheer volume of learning resources available online to organisations has brought another dimension to the role of the L&D professional. With choice comes responsibility, and the task of navigating and selecting the very best and most relevant from the resources can be daunting. No wonder one-third of learners report that they cannot find what they need!

What might be holding us back from using MOOCs?

- 88% have invested heavily in their own LMS which they are using to store, deliver and track e-learning courses (only 21% integrate this with external video libraries)
- 86% are creating custom content in-house
- 72% have e-learning courses custom-made externally

Case study: ADP

Automatic Data Processing, Inc. (ADP) is one of the largest providers of business processing and cloud-based solutions to employers and car dealerships around the world, serving about 620,000 organisations in more than 125 countries.

ADP wanted to build on its industry-leading academy for employees by incorporating the IMC MOOC within the existing structure of management and leadership development courses. By delivering creative and innovative learning content in a structured and scalable format, the MOOC will allow employees to learn at their own pace. Opportunities to collaborate and share experiences are offered through discussion forums whilst practical exercises are designed to test understanding and ensure employees are able to apply their learning to the workplace.
Lesson 6. Drive engagement

Improving completion and pass rates is an important consideration for formal compliance training. MOOC designers are using all the tricks in the trade to increase retention, such as:

- Instant and automated feedback for online assessments, quizzes etc (both machine-graded and/or peer reviewed)
- Use of course alumni to act as mentors and discussion group managers (in our sample, only 16% of individuals have access to a tutor or subject expert when learning online)
- Sending congratulatory emails once a course milestone has been passed
- Recording audio comments on assignments
- Branding the course as ‘exclusive’ so that learners perceive they are specially selected to take part
- Recognising and rewarding completion – and recognising non-completing participation
- Providing academic credit or counting towards an internal points system (used in 13% of organisations currently), although this is less critical where the majority of learners are graduates

Learner persistence is mediated by their prior knowledge, intention to complete, self-efficacy and self-regulation. Research shows that sustained and frequent participation in online learning gives better results than short ‘bursts’ of learning⁸, so the ability to set aside regular, dedicated time for learning can have an important impact on engagement. In a recent learning landscape audit for a large private sector organisation, 67% of learners report a lack of time to study as the greatest barrier to learning, directly influenced by factors beyond their control such as competing priorities and unforeseen events at work. Some of the barriers to learning are however, directly within the control of L&D. In the Learning Landscape study, learners reported:

- 37% lacked somewhere appropriate to study
- 35% lacked suitable IT equipment
- 33% were struggling with unreliable infrastructure, low bandwidth or difficulties accessing content through the corporate firewall

Dropout may relate back to poor engagement and in our In Focus Report on Building Employee Engagement⁹ we look at a number of factors that can help to improve engagement.

Top learning companies, whilst still having a long way to go, can provide some useful pointers to improving engagement. They are achieving better completion rates (13% improvement on the sample average) and greater improvement in measures of staff satisfaction to aid motivation and retention (26% compared to 15% sample average). Compared with the bottom quartile, they are more than three times as likely to ensure that they have communication plans in place for all key stakeholders, and it is three times more likely that their senior managers demonstrate an active commitment to learning.

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⁸ [http://www.stanford.edu/~halawa/cgi-bin/](http://www.stanford.edu/~halawa/cgi-bin/)
⁹ [http://towardsmaturity.org/tag/in-focus/](http://towardsmaturity.org/tag/in-focus/)
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Case study: Four point plan for effective training

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recently undertook a review on financial crime risks where it set out some pointers on effective training methods. These include:

- Using innovative means to deliver training
- Keeping courses short and focused
- Using real and relevant case studies
- Using poster campaigns

In creating the Compliance MOOC, we have used different media to meet different learning needs and deliver different types of content. Videos are popular for delivering messages from senior managers such as ‘tone from the top’ speeches. More in-depth topics benefit from self-paced learning opportunities and allowing the delegate to reflect on what they have covered through assessments and engaging exercises. We have also incorporated serious games to engage learners and provide them with immediate targeted feedback.

The second point is worth reiterating, especially when it comes to involvement with subject matter experts. Short, focused and engaging courses will keep the delegate’s attention and optimise the effectiveness of the learning process. Each learning object in the Compliance MOOC is between 5 and 20 minutes long.

The use of case studies, scenarios and real examples is very important in making the course relevant to the learner’s experiences. The more relevant the course is, the more the learner will engage with it and learn from it. The IMC Compliance MOOC includes real-life case studies, particularly of compliance breaches and initiatives from the regulators. For example, our games-based courses are set around business scenarios, ensuring that the learner is aware of the consequences of different courses of action in a real-life setting.

The final point illustrates the importance of training being more than a course. A broad communications campaign aimed at creating a culture of compliance including posters, courses, events and discussions is most likely to have the required effect. Introducing certificates of completion and test scores is sometimes used to add an element of competition and motivate learners.

Provided by IMC
MOOCs in the corporate setting

Using external MOOCs

MOOC providers are developing products to be used in a number of contexts in the corporate world, such as recruitment. Companies can spot potential talent through their performance on relevant MOOC courses or use new services offered by the MOOC providers to help in hiring and recruitment.

For the individual, MOOCs are an important part of Continuing Professional Development, with 7% of learners in our Learning Landscape study studying online, outside work for their CPD – a greater proportion than are taking courses in work for their personal CPD.

L&D can help here, on the one hand by curating and signposting excellent and relevant external MOOC content and using it to supplement existing formal training, and on the other by becoming more aware of the scope and volume of learning being done independently by their staff. Much of this learning is going on unseen, unrewarded and is not ‘counted’ or valid for compliance purposes. For example, currently, only 19% of L&D report being aware of how their staff are using social media outside the workplace to share ideas (rising to 42% in top learning companies).

Opening up internal training

In the 2013 Benchmark Study, 58% are looking to technology-enabled learning to help inform their customers/suppliers of new products. Fewer than half actually achieve this, but these organisations might well consider the potential of mimicking the MOOC model and open up their internal learning to their supply chain and markets. Over the past four years, the numbers extending their learning offering to their customers has steadily increased to almost half of organisations. Supplier training is less widespread and offered by less than one in five companies.

Benefits of the MOOC format

- Accessibility
- Flexibility (independent of location and time)
- Scalability
- Cost-efficient and high quality content
- Fosters intrinsic motivation to learn
- Lifelong learning experiences
- Improves quality of existing education
- Multiplier for marketing purposes
- Prestige

Our customers/service users

Our suppliers

2012 N=385  2011 N=485  2010 N=435
Examples include:

- Digital marketing and special promotions – to train customers on how to use their new products (e.g. the SAP openSAP platform; BetterMoneyHabits from the Bank of America)
- Cost-effective training to the supply chain – often smaller businesses with unknown or widely varying learning policies and resources – to ensure consistency or set quality requirements

The advantages to the organisation extend beyond building a loyal and educated customer/supply chain. With the greater numbers of learners comes invaluable big data on patterns and approaches to learning and insights into learner behaviour. Large cohorts of users give reliable user experience results to help inform future programmes. Hosting large subject networks and communities link the organisation to a wider knowledge and experience base to support problem solving and innovation. Not to mention any thought leadership or philanthropic motives that may be realised.

Sharing great digital content with others who can less afford to produce or access such courses themselves can also help satisfy corporate and social responsibility objectives (e.g. the GivebackUK campaign to support those in the third sector in the UK\textsuperscript{10}).

**Training for boards and senior managers**

With recent scandals involving directors and senior managers, firms need to consider the training requirements of their most senior staff. This population may be very experienced, but given the ever-changing nature of the regulatory environment in which they operate, and the increasing levels of personal liability they may face, their training needs are key to the organisation meeting its compliance requirements.

There are two principles of adult learning theory that are particularly relevant when applied to senior staff: firstly, the need to remember that adult learning involves ego and secondly that adult learners will come to learning with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, self-direction, interests, and competencies.

Compliance and training staff should bear in mind that it can be difficult for senior staff to show vulnerability and admit to any gaps in their understanding and competency, and so they may not always be open and honest about their training needs.

Many senior staff can also be reluctant to take time out from busy schedules to attend training. This is where a MOOC can help, providing modular learning at the pace and time that suits the senior employee.

\textit{Provided by IMC}

\textsuperscript{10} [http://www.charitylearning.org/givebackuk/](http://www.charitylearning.org/givebackuk/)

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Tips for effective training

Designing and implementing effective training and professional development for adults is not straightforward. Adults are not the most willing students, and need to be approached in a particular way if anything is to be learned.

In the academic journal Education Research Service Spectrum (1996), Speck set out some of the main elements of what makes training and professional development effective for adult learners. These elements provide a useful starting point for those firms developing a training strategy, and should guide firms in the design of their overall training programmes.

- Adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them. Application in the ‘real world’ is important and relevant to the adult learner’s personal and professional needs.
- Adults want to be the origin of their own learning and will resist learning activities they believe to be an attack on their competence. Thus, professional development needs to give participants some control over the what, who, how, why, when and where of their learning.
- Adult learners need to see that the professional development learning and their day-to-day activities are related and relevant.
- Adult learners need direct, concrete experiences in which they apply the learning in real work situations.
- Adult learning involves ego. Professional development must be structured to provide support from peers and to reduce the fear of judgement during learning.
- Adults need to receive feedback on how they are doing and the results of their efforts. Opportunities must be built into professional development activities that allow the learner to practice the learning and receive structured, helpful feedback.
- Adults need to participate in small-group activities during the learning to move them beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Small-group activities provide an opportunity to share, reflect and generalise their learning experiences.
- Adult learners come to learning with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, self-direction, interests and competencies. This diversity must be accommodated in professional development planning.
- Transfer of learning for adults is not automatic and must be facilitated. Coaching and other kinds of follow-up support are needed to help adult learners transfer learning into daily practice so that it is sustained.

*Tips provided by IMC*
Conclusion

MOOCs are here to stay. For corporate L&D there are valuable lessons to be learned from MOOC design and implementation that can help improve take-up and completion across all types of technology-enabled learning.

Just as a young tree needs to be planted in good soil, with the right amount of food and water to flourish, so it is important to bring all the key elements of successful learning together to deliver results:

- A focus on the learner experience
- Solid instructional design
- A robust delivery platform
- Support through the learning process and
- Consideration to the application of learning in the workflow

Top learning companies are demonstrating that, with these factors in place, improved learner motivation and engagement are resulting in bottom line business benefits.

*Learning innovation, done well, is impacting bottom line business results.*

‘*My main job was developing talent. I was a gardener providing water and nourishment to our top 750 people. Of courses I had to pull some weeds too.*’ (Jack Welch)
Recommended resources and references

Case studies and white papers on the Towards Maturity site

The Learner Voice, April 2014  www.towardsmaturity.org/learnervoice1
Reinvigorating compliance training  www.towardsmaturity.org/in-focus2013/compliance

Useful Links on the IMC site:


Other background reading

http://www.educause.edu/library/massive-open-online-course-mooc
http://mfeldstein.com/four-barriers-that-moocs-must-overcome-to-become-sustainable-model/


Mira Vogel (2014) Collaborative learning through MOOCs and social development
http://prezi.com/1iwedegytf0h/collaborative-learning-through-moocs-and-social-development/

Bert De Coutere:  http://homocompetens.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/leadermooc-behind-scenes-roadmap-and.html

MOOC platforms to explore for great free online content:

http://www.opencourseworld.de/ IMC OpenCourseWorld
http://www.moocs.co/ for an online global directory of MOOCs

https://www.edx.org (Google platform strong in IT/technical courses)
https://www.coursera.org (business and leadership content)
https://www.futurelearn.com (The Open University)
https://www.udacity.com (University branded MOOCs)
http://www.udemy.com/ (Apple iTunes store approach)
https://iversity.org
https://www.canvas.net
https://open.sap.com/courses
http://ocw.mit.edu/ MIT OpenCourseware
https://www.youtube.com/education YouTube EDU
http://alison.com/course/ Alison
Notes on Towards Maturity 2013 Benchmark research

Data collection

Individuals with responsibility for implementing learning technologies in the workplace were invited to participate in a two-part online review between June and August 2013. 538 respondents from 481 organisations took part in the survey. Full details of the methodology are given in the TM2013-14 Benchmark Report.

In past studies we have analysed the implementation activity of the more mature organisations and grouped their behaviours into six workstreams that we describe in the Towards Maturity Model. These six workstreams of effective practice are at the heart of the Towards Maturity Index. (TMI), the single index figure from 1 – 100 that each participant in the 2013 study received to benchmark the maturity of their implementation of learning technologies.

The behaviours in the workstreams are reviewed annually with industry subject experts and practitioners to reflect the latest thinking.

Those in the top quartile of the TMI are not only achieving significantly higher impact than average but are much more likely to be working proactively to improve their implementation and integrate their learning activities into the workplace. These top learning organisations both exhibit and help us to define what we understand by effective practice. Organisations in all sectors and of all sizes fall into this top quartile and throughout this report we have included observations from top quartile learning companies. More detailed case studies can be found at www.towardsmaturity.org/tag/top-quartile-learning-organisations/.

Towards Maturity Learning Landscape

Over 10,000 learners from private sector companies took part in the Towards Maturity Learning Landscape during 2013. Results from a sample of 2,000 learners (selecting every 5th learner) have been analysed in this report.

The full methodology is reported in Appendix A of the TM2013 Benchmark report, ‘New Learning Agenda: Talent: Technology: Change’.
About IMC

IMC is a leading full-service provider in digital learning and education founded in 1996 as a spin-off of the Institute for Information Systems at Saarland University in Germany.

Long standing European e-learning market leader and multiple winner of the DIGITA Innovation award in Germany, IMC has grown internationally to serve over 1,000 customers - companies, public institutions & universities - in more than 20 countries.

Our portfolio includes:
- Compliance learning
- MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)
- Learning and talent management
- E-learning content
- Authoring and publishing
- Explanatory videos
- Business process guidance
- Learning Consultancy

IMC has won international awards such as the Top ‘20 Learning Portal Companies Award’ and the ‘MMB E-Learning Economy ranking’ and their products have achieved prominent positions in all international analyst rankings, including Gartner, Brandon Hall, Bersin & Associates.

IMC’s Customers include:

URL: [http://www.im-c.co.uk/en/](http://www.im-c.co.uk/en/)

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About Towards Maturity

*Towards Maturity is a benchmarking practice that provides authoritative research and expert consultancy services to help assess and improve the effectiveness and consistency of L&D performance within organisations. The Towards Maturity portfolio includes:*

**The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study**
http://towardsmaturity.org/static/survey/

The Towards Maturity Benchmark Study is an internationally recognised longitudinal study on the effective implementation of learning innovation based on the input of 2,900 organisations and 10,000 learners over ten years. Towards Maturity continuously surveys and studies how people learn at work, and uses this data to help L&D professionals assess and improve the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of their learning provision. Previous research papers and sector specific reports are available through the [Towards Maturity Shop](http://towardsmaturity.org/static/survey/).

**Towards Maturity Benchmark Centre**
http://mybenchmark.towardsmaturity.org/

Applying everything we know about good practice to provide personal practical time saving advice through an online three-step continuous improvement process. Benchmark your current approach with your peers.

**Towards Maturity Strategic Review**
http://www.towardsmaturity.org/strategicreview

The Towards Maturity Strategic Review is an extra helping-hand to help you turn good ideas into good practice in your organisation. It helps you analyse and interpret your personal benchmark report to establish a base line and identify the next action steps for performance improvement.

**Towards Maturity Learning Landscape**
www.towardsmaturity.org/learner

The Towards Maturity Learning Landscape Study helps you understand the behaviours of your staff so you can design learning solutions that can be embedded more effectively into the workflow. It provides structured feedback across companies, locations and departments.

**Towards Maturity Sector Benchmark groups**
www.towardsmaturity.org/benchmarkgroups

Join senior L&D leaders in your sector three times a year to use the Towards Maturity Benchmark to support performance improvement, prioritise action planning and accelerate progress.

Visit [www.towardsmaturity.org](http://www.towardsmaturity.org) for more information.

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