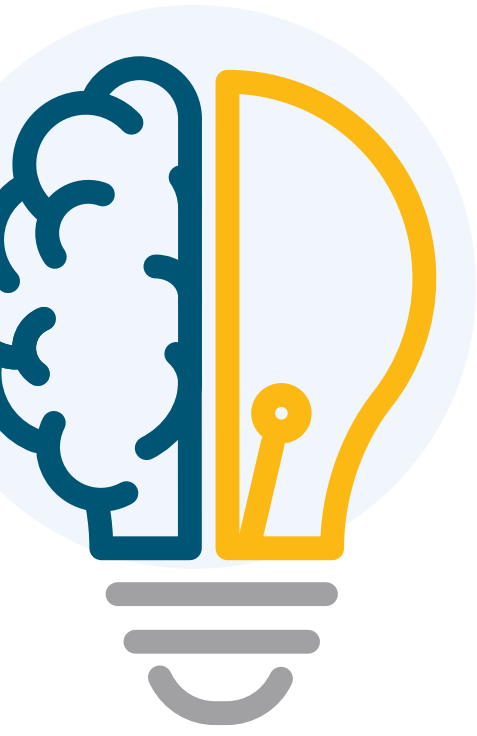


What's the Best Way for Organizations to Learn?

By Laura Cassiday, Ph.D.

Never before have there been so many ways for employees to learn in organizations. Along with traditional in-person classes, there are self-study libraries, coaching, and digital learning solutions. But just because information is available doesn't mean it satisfies the conditions our brains require for effective, lasting learning — or scales well throughout entire companies.





When it comes to learning at an organizational level, very few solutions provide a meaningful, coherent learning experience for every employee at a reasonable cost and speed. Let's examine the factors necessary for teaching an entire organization new habits or skills — and see what science suggests is the best solution for long-term, wide-scale learning.



Learning with the brain in mind

Any culture-change program worth its salt must take into consideration two neuroscience-backed concepts: The AGES Model™ and social learning. Let's break them down.

The AGES Model™ consists of four components to maximize encoding of new information by the brain for easy recall under pressure.

-  **Attention:** Focusing closely, without distraction.
-  **Generation:** Linking new information to existing knowledge, sparking insights.
-  **Emotion:** Slightly positive or negative feelings, which enhance recall.
-  **Spacing:** Spreading learning sessions over time rather than cramming them into a couple of days.

In addition, social learning — learning in a group setting with opportunities for sharing — causes information to be encoded more deeply, recalled more easily, and acted upon more often.

Other important factors



Scale

Organizational learning is most effective when everyone in the company is learning the same information at the same time, not just a few top leaders.



Speed

How long it takes for the majority of people in the company to learn the same new information.



Coherence

Everybody is learning the same information, not a mishmash of different strategies.



Cost

How much it costs for everyone in the organization to learn.

With these factors in mind, let's compare four popular learning approaches:

	In-Person Retreat	Self-Study Content Library	One-on-One Coaching	Next-Generation Digital
Attention	++	+	+++	++
Generation	+++	+	+++	++
Emotion	+++	+	+++	++
Spacing	+	+++	+++	+++
Social Learning	+++	+	+	++
Scale	+	+++	+	+++
Speed	+	+	+	+++
Coherence	+++	+	+	+++
Cost	\$\$\$	\$	\$\$\$	\$\$

Key: +++ strong, ++ moderate, + poor, \$\$\$ expensive, \$\$ moderate, \$ inexpensive



A clear winner

Although each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, the only one with moderate-to-strong ratings for every component is a next-generation digital solution.

What do we mean by next-generation? We're not talking about simply moving content from in-person workshops online, like a slide deck you can flip through on your own. Next-generation digital solutions are intentionally designed to activate AGES, with social learning components, practice tools, and sustainment resources. The entire company, not just top leaders, learn the same material at the same time and share insights as they learn.

As a leader, if you're trying to impact only 10 employees, by all means, whisk them off to an exclusive retreat or assign them coaches. At the other extreme, if you want to provide learning resources to the entire company at minimal cost and don't expect them to learn coherent approaches or remember much, subscribe to a content library. But if you're trying to impact thousands of people to achieve real culture change throughout your organization in a few short months, a next-generation digital solution is the clear winner.

