

**7 BE THE BENCHMARK**

# LEARNING SOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW NORMAL

ACHIEVING POSITIVE RESULTS SAFELY

**SGS ACADEMY**

**WHITE PAPER**



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## ABSTRACT

This white paper considers the impact of COVID-19 on business strategies and looks at how digitalized courses represent a safe and effective method for delivering organizations' learning and development goals in the "New Normal".

# Executive Summary



The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the business environment for industries all over the world. Forward-thinking companies are now re-considering their learning and development strategies to ensure success against the challenges of the New Normal.

Our ability to adapt quickly to these unprecedented times represents an opportunity for businesses. Training remains the optimal way to ensure a company is prepared for these challenges, but social distancing and travel restrictions make traditional classroom training more difficult to achieve.

SGS has drawn on its experience as the world's leading testing and certification company to define the 6Es an organization should consider when planning a learning and development strategy. This experience has led to the creation of the digitalized classroom, and enhancement of our current eLearning portfolio which offers a range of digital training solutions – a key component in any successful program during COVID-19.

# Introduction

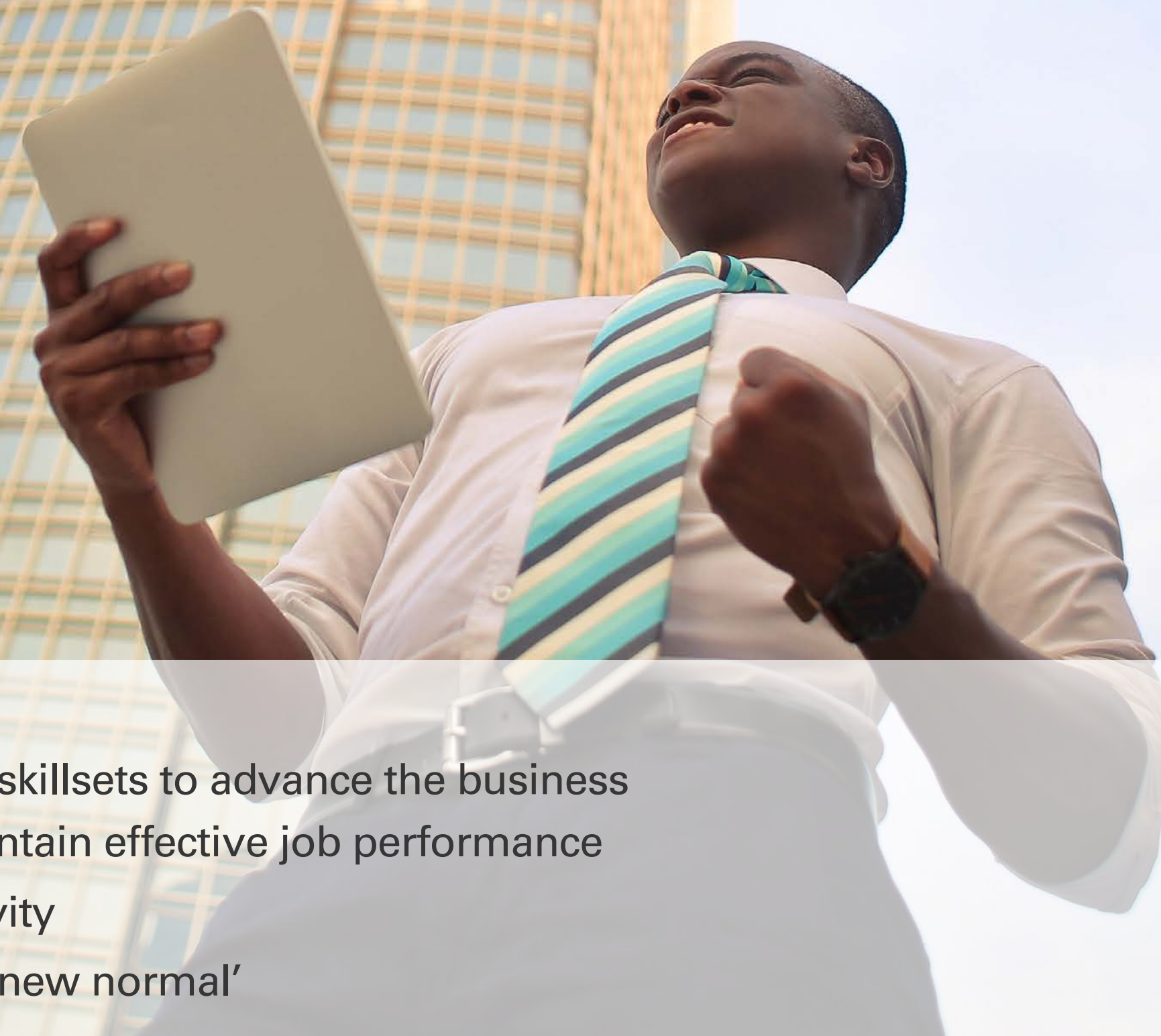
A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white blazer over a striped shirt and dark pants, stands in a meeting room. She is smiling and gesturing with her hands while presenting to a group of people. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders is visible, looking towards the presenter. Behind the presenter is a large whiteboard with handwritten notes and diagrams. The notes include 'Submitted', 'Approved', 'Paid', 'Budget', and 'Approved'. There are also several colorful sticky notes (yellow, pink, blue) on the board. The room has large windows in the background, letting in natural light.

The full economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be completely understood. No industry, economy, or population has been unaffected. As countries begin to return to a form of normality, it is clear the crisis has had a profound impact on the buying behaviors of businesses. It remains to be seen how this will affect training provision in the long term, but in the short term we must assume that there will be a shift in the way companies approach workplace learning and development (L&D).

COVID-19 has been a global crisis unlike anything experienced in our lifetimes. Many of our traditional routes to learning – classroom teaching, face-to-face tuition – have been rendered impossible by the need for social distancing. What the pandemic has demonstrated, however, is that when humans accept and acknowledge the challenge of a global health crisis, our natural adaptability as a race means we very quickly find powerful alternatives.

Technical training has traditionally worked best in the classroom environment. With that option reduced due to lockdowns, digital learning has become the natural replacement. It can be assumed classroom-based learning solutions will return as the threat of the pandemic abates but by then many of us will be comfortable with digital learning.

# Is Training Necessary?



## THE PURPOSES OF TRAINING:

- ▶ To develop and improve employee skillsets to advance the business
- ▶ To increase knowledge-base to maintain effective job performance
- ▶ To improve efficiency and productivity
- ▶ To understand and prepare for the 'new normal'

Many organizations may be asking themselves whether training is still a vital cost when finances and revenue have been so adversely hit during the pandemic. Reducing training budgets can seem like a quick and easy fix when trying to improve a company's financial position.

Cutting training is, however, a short-term solution that can have a major negative impact on the future direction of the business. Many economies around the world are already returning to a form of normality – the new normal. Businesses that stop spending money on training will find their staff are less able to adapt to the new economic landscape.

A workforce that is highly trained is also highly adaptable. Reacting quickly to the external pressures an economic crisis can place on a business requires the swift implementation of new strategies to ensure the objectives of the business align with the requirements of the market.

Training is more than just an investment in the future; it is also an investment in the now. By devoting resources to training, a business is showing its commitment to its employees. This will give it greater flexibility in terms of productivity and performance when planning. In turn, these will lead to improved morale among employees, leading to better productivity and staff retention.

# Well-Being & Digital Training and Support



The new norm is now reflecting that employees' well-being is a key focus for many L&D professionals. This support would have been delivered both through instructor-led training and the support of colleagues. Homeworking, in addition to the effects of the pandemic, both personally and societally, have rendered this traditional support impossible.

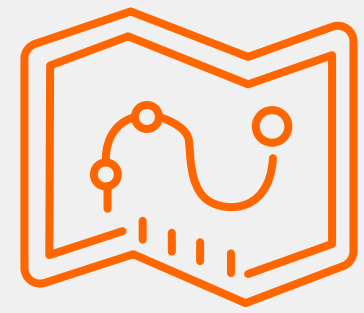
To replace the office-based work environment, many companies have moved their communications online and most employees are now more comfortable operating in a digital world.

While classroom-based training will remain the preferred option for many people, virtual instructor-led training (VILT) is now ranked in the top five preferred modalities for all training topics. As more and more of our working life is transferred online, and we adapt to this form of training and support, it must be assumed VILT, eLearning or Blended learning will remain a vital aspect of any L&D strategy.

# 6 *E* Considerations



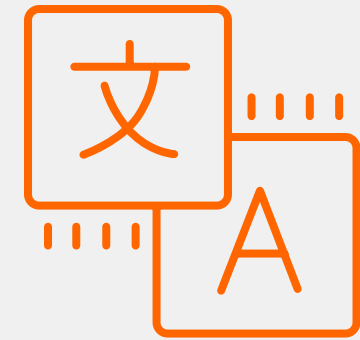
**EXAMINE**



**EXPLORE**



**ENSURE**



**ENABLE**



**ESTABLISH**



**EVALUATE**

As the world's leading business enhancement, testing and certification company, with a global network of over 2,600 offices and laboratories, SGS's experience of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic is not just theoretical. Our policy has been to embrace these changes while seizing the opportunities they afford. This has given us practical experience, drawn from multiple industries and markets, which has allowed us to develop the 6Es that all businesses should consider when planning a proactive L&D strategy.

# 6 *E* Considerations



**EXAMINE**



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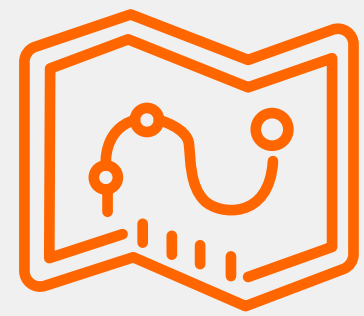
Employees have been affected both mentally and physically by the demands of the pandemic. New learning strategies need to consider the personal pressures, including homeworking and lockdown, the impact of a 24 hour cycle dominated by the pandemic and the economy, and the concerns employees may have over the safety of work environments. Without a firm understanding of how employees will respond, it is difficult to develop an L&D strategy that will gain the necessary 'buy in' by the target end users.



# 6 *E* Considerations



EXAMINE



**EXPLORE**



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EVALUATE

Multiple digital learning options are available to businesses, meaning the right route is out there if you explore the possibilities. The right digital training option must meet requirements with regards to company infrastructure, budget, alignment with L&D strategy and end user needs. Working with top management, a cross-section of end users and other stakeholders, it is important to define the objectives of the training and its up-front and ongoing costs. MoSCoW prioritization can be employed to help

# 6 *E* Considerations



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EVALUATE

An online training strategy is only as successful as the learners' ability to access it. Whichever model for digital learning a company decides to use, it must be welcoming, accessible and relevant to the end user. For many learners, this may be the first time they've taken part in VILT training or an eLearning course and it is important for the first impression to be good. Without that, ongoing engagement might be problematic.

# 6 *E* Considerations



EXAMINE



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EVALUATE

An effective training technique must produce positive results in all learners. True enablement of the learning cohort can only be achieved if the transition from face-to-face classroom training to online digital learning is an enjoyable and beneficial experience for the learner. It must consider language compatibility, web accessibility, and the educational levels of the intended user. If these are not considered, the recipient of the training will not properly engage with it and the desired results will not be achieved. There also needs to be some form of incentive to complete the training course. This could be an employee scorecard, a branded attendance certificate, or recognition that completing the course is another step up their career development pathway.

# 6 *E* Considerations



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EVALUATE

It is advisable to establish an online 'live' support team to help employees enjoy a smooth implementation process. In most cases, a short phone call or virtual help session will solve implementation problems. This will also help to keep the end user motivated and engaged. The support team can additionally monitor enquiries to identify and rectify any common issues to provide an improved service.

# 6 *E* Considerations



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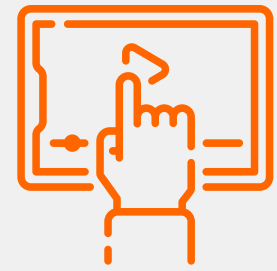
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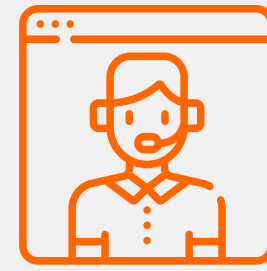
**EVALUATE**

Successful digital training does not end when the learner completes the course. True enhancement is delivered when the course is evaluated for successes and weaknesses. This should include feedback from the learner on whether the course was beneficial, as well as an assessment of its impact on the business. The outcome of this evaluation can then be fed back into course development – the objective must be continuous improvement.

# Digitalization of the Classroom



## ELEARNING



## VIRTUAL INSTRUCTOR LED TRAINING (VILT)



## BLENDED LEARNING

Utilizing the 6Es has allowed SGS to create effective digital solutions that protect and support employees and customers during the learning experience. Many face-to-face courses have been reimagined as online digital courses that can be delivered either virtually ( VILT) via platforms such as Zoom and Adobe Connect or as an eLearning solution, or blending them.

Face-to-face training in classrooms is still the preferred training option for many people, to support with this SGS have put in place venue checklists for the safety of both learners and tutors. However, this is expected to change as learners and tutors all become more aware of the benefits of digital training options.

# Digitalization of the Classroom

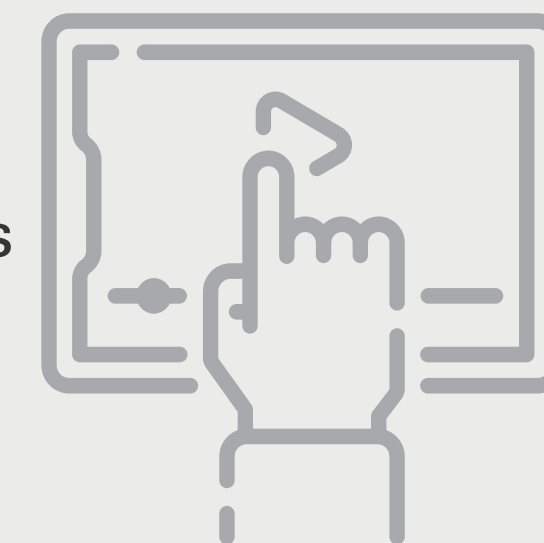
## ELEARNING

An autonomous delivery method that gives the learner control over the pace of their study. eLearning is the ideal solution for imparting consistent knowledge to a wide audience in a variety of locations. The inclusion of an assessment at the end of the course means it can also act as a robust compliance training program that tracks and evaluates the knowledge levels of the learners.

As with all learning strategies, a key consideration is engagement. Development of an eLearning course should begin with the identification of objectives, budget and technical infrastructure. A variety of techniques can then be employed – videos, animations, audio sequences, scenario based journeys and learner-driven content – to ensure the learner remains engaged and the objectives are met. In general, it is advisable to make sure eLearning is not too onerous or difficult, otherwise there is a risk of course abandonment.

## BENEFITS

- ▶ Self-paced – reduces stress and increases satisfaction and information retention
- ▶ Accessible in multiple territories and languages
- ▶ Less environmental impact
- ▶ Performance can be tracked and checked using a learning management system (LMS)
- ▶ Automated certificate generation
- ▶ Safe, remote learning
- ▶ Easily incorporated into continuous learning strategies



# Digitalization of the Classroom

## VIRTUAL INSTRUCTOR LED TRAINING (VILT)

Considered the middle ground between classroom-based training and eLearning, VILT provides learners with direct access to tutors. VILT is scheduled like a classroom lesson but delivered remotely via a conferencing application. The student will join the session with a live tutor and other students, giving them the advantages of live classroom collaboration and support but with the benefits of social distancing.

Successful delivery of a VILT course requires both the tutor and the learner to have a working knowledge of the conferencing application. It is also advisable to have each session invigilated by a host who can deal with any external issues being faced by the learners – for example, loss of audio, frozen screens, etc. The tutor is thereby free to remain focused on delivering the training, while the host rectifies the problem.

Learner engagement is an important consideration when developing a VILT course. It should contain a variety of engaging materials and techniques, including shorter courses, breakout rooms for learner collaborations, whiteboards, chats and polls. The course should also include frequent breaks and regular interactivity.

## BENEFITS

- ▶ Replicates the familiar face-to-face learning experience most people enjoy
- ▶ Real-time interaction with the tutor and other learners
- ▶ Attendees can network with other learners
- ▶ Safe, remote learning





# Digitalization of the Classroom

## BLENDED LEARNING

Encompassing a range of learning solutions – eLearning, VILT and face-to-face – blended learning creates the perfect synthesis between visual, auditory, read/write and kinaesthetic learning styles. Organizations that have complex or technical training to deliver should consider blended learning because it still incorporates the face-to-face instruction that is so vital for the successful delivery of this information.

Businesses looking to utilize blended learning should first define the objectives of the course, before splitting them into Knowledge Objectives and Skills Objectives. Knowledge objectives are then taught using eLearning or VILT strategies. This ensures the learner has a good understanding of the topic prior to attending a face-to-face course or practical workshop that delivers the necessary skills training. Splitting the objectives in this way ensures all objectives are met while mitigating safety concerns.

## BENEFITS

- ▶ Flexible
- ▶ Effective and efficient
- ▶ Easily adapted to different learning styles
- ▶ Nurtures skills like time management and critical thinking
- ▶ Utilizes both accredited and non-accredited portfolios
- ▶ Reduces face-to-face time without impacting outcomes
- ▶ Performance tracking



# SGS ACADEMY

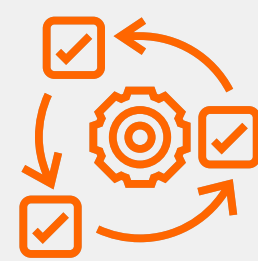
SGS has developed a range of standard courses covering the majority of industries. Utilizing a global network of experts and with highly competent tutors, SGS is able to deliver high quality content to learners all round the world. Whether its eLearning, VILT, blended learning or traditional face-to-face classroom-based learning, SGS has a solution to help you achieve your L&D goals in a safe and efficient manner.

In addition to standard courses, SGS can also marshal its global network of experts and industry experience to develop and implement tailored learning solutions. These can incorporate a range of learning techniques to ensure the client's objectives are met or exceeded.

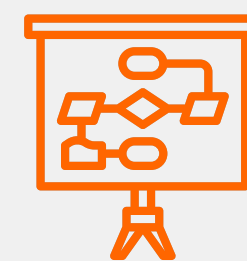
## BENEFITS



Using industry data to create a comprehensive list of requirements



Flexible training solutions to meet the client's objectives



Identifying effective training methodologies to ensure successful delivery of training goals



Employee performance can be monitored and assessed using the SGS LMS



Helps to reinforce continuous improvement objectives

# About SGS



SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 89,000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 2,600 offices and laboratories around the world.

## CONTACT SGS



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WHEN YOU NEED TO BE SURE

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