



HR Meets the Cloud

The evolution of training – organizational development on demand

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By Bob Kelleher

There's no doubt the recession has affected training budgets in companies of all sizes and across all industries. The need to find affordable and effective ways to develop talent is more critical than ever. Clearly, employee development is essential to engage and retain your employees. In fact, studies reveal that Gen Yers believe career development is three times more important than money.

I've spent 25 years working for large global companies, in various Training, Organizational Development, and Human Resources capacities. Now cloud computing has arrived to solve an age-old challenge for these departments: What do you do if you don't have the resources or budget to develop the quality internal programs your business needs and you don't want to pay high per-use licensing fees? For many, the answer may lie in the Employee Engagement Library.

The Challenge: Scarcity of Time and Money

How to juggle the cost and time of curriculum design and development with an organization's need for training and developing? Especially when one hour of training requires more than 40 hours of instructional design effort, costing on average \$5,934 per hour of training (Chapman Alliance, 2010 research project including 249 companies and 3,947 L&D professionals). This costly challenge results in Training and OD folks struggling to find the time and resources to develop content and prevents them from doing what they do best—delivering the training!

During my years in the corporate world, I wrestled with this dilemma.

While I could always partner with an outside vendor, the cost to develop content with outside vendors and suppliers was rarely feasible. Adding to the challenge was how often these sources wanted to “rent me knowledge” rather than “sell me knowledge.” Too often, vendors would wrap in licensing fees, or charge “per-seat” costs each time there was a training event. Sometimes they would even insist on conducting the training themselves—with their justification being “*we need to ensure quality.*”

Over the years, I ultimately decided to partner only with vendors who were willing to work with me and my team to co-develop the training content, license all training to me, and allow us to deliver it. This last point was key: With 450 global locations, we *had* to own the delivery. This allowed our HR and OD departments to facilitate and do the training ourselves. It also helped increase the engagement levels of my own team who loved doing the platform training. However, it was often difficult to find vendors willing to work within this arrangement, and our vendor partnership model ultimately proved to be cost prohibitive. For years, I would fantasize about a better mousetrap.

When I left corporate America to write my book, I began speaking to organizations of all sizes. Ultimately, these companies started asking me to assist them in their talent management efforts. Quickly, I knew that my value offering would be to offer my clients complete and unlimited access to all of my previously developed training, tools, templates, and processes.

My goal was always to get my clients to fish on their own, and access to my library of materials ensured the continuity of their talent management efforts. However, this value offering, although well intentioned, often proved to be clumsy, resulting in clients contacting me to inquire if I had this particular training or form—leading to me digging through my database to find a match. Additionally, this model was conditional on me being available, or even having to be present physically. I fantasized even more—how to create a model where clients have access to these programs and tools without having to contact me or without my having to fly to Kansas City, San Francisco, or London. How to leverage the Cloud to allow my materials to be everywhere at once...

The Dream: OD On Demand

For starters, I must confess I am a geek. I love gadgets and technology, and consider myself a technological early adopter. I am one of those nuts who sleeps in front of the Apple store to get the latest iPhone or iPad. I became

intrigued with the potential of cloud computing very early on. What if I could give clients access to a platform containing hundreds of talent management tools, training, templates, and processes all easily downloadable from the Cloud? What if I could make the materials generic enough to allow a client to download a training program, say “*How to Manage Remote Employees*,” and simply convert the program to their template, color, and logo? What if I also could offer built-in facilitator notes so even less-experienced trainers can deliver the training development? What if everyone who touches talent management within a company—OD, Training, HR, Communications, etc.—had the same access and same solution via the Cloud? What if the price of this solution was so reasonable that cost will no longer be the obstacle to building a culture of employee development?

The Access Solution: The Employee Engagement Library

The creation of The Employee Engagement Library, a collection of hundreds of programs, tools, and templates residing in the Cloud, allows clients instant access. The library is built around “10 Steps of Employee Engagement,” is simple to use and navigate, and has a search feature. Simply type in “Generation Y,” and a summary of Generation Y training and related resources appear. The Employee Engagement Library (www.EmployeeEngagementLibrary.com) is available for a low annual membership. For less than the cost to develop two hours of training, clients will have 12 months access to hundreds of talent management resources and employee engagement programs. Clients are given a passcode, enter the Cloud, and start viewing and downloading. All of the programs clients use within the calendar year, they also own for subsequent years, even if they don’t re-subscribe.

Bob Kelleher is a speaker, thought leader, and author of “Louder Than Words: 10 Practical Employee Engagement Steps That Drive Results” (<http://www.BobKelleher.com>). He is also the founder and CEO of The Employee Engagement Group (<http://www.EmployeeEngagment.com>) and consultant on the subjects of employee engagement, workforce trends, and leadership. Stay tuned for Kelleher’s upcoming book, “Creativeship—a Novel for Evolving Leaders.”