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Rapid Learning and Applications, Amazingly Lower Cost and Faster Speed of Development

Plus 50 online demos, examples, templates, and 20 video vignettes

Ray Jimenez, Ph.D.
3-Minute e-Learning
Rapid Learning and Applications,
Amazingly Lower Cost and Faster Speed of Development

Plus 50 online demos, examples, templates, and 20 video vignettes

Ray Jimenez, Ph.D.
To my real heroes

Marisu, Raymond, and Francesca
Acknowledgment

I am indebted to the hundreds of people who provided the inspiration and opportunities to test ideas, through their writings provoked me to ask questions and discover answers and for those who finally helped write this book. I cannot name them all here. Special recognition is due to a number of them. Ed Martin, Lance Dublin, Elliott Masie, Jay Cross, Richard Cross, Anthony Karrer, Ivan Cortes, Gary Van Antwerp, Ed Schneider, Judi Sharp, Teresita Vaquer, Maricel Sesdoyro, Cheryl Borsoto, Arn Reodique, Vikram Singh, Rafael Santo Tomas, Patrick Kehres, Debbie Glick, Chris Terrill, Bob Huebner, Maria Simpson, Bill Brandon, Michael Baroff, Joe DiDonato, Ann Buzzotta, Vic Buzzotta, Katherine Haynes, Susan Cole, Diane Allessi Williams, Eileen Dello-Martin, Jeffrey Groff, and Portia Groff and to my e-Learning associates and virtual team members in the Philippines, India, Canada, United Kingdom, Columbia and the United States of America.

If you want to know …

How to cut development costs down to 30%, turn to page 181

Interview techniques to help Subject Matter Experts (SME), check out C-3

Create performance driven content, go to page B-12

Add performance metrics in your LMSs, see page 167

Layout content into small lessons or snippets, check out page B-34

Estimating costs and production timelines, go to page B-55

Access live and online demos, templates and examples, visit www.vignettestraining.com
# Contents

Introduction  
1. Why Are We Going “Gaga”?  
2. Revolutionary and Incremental Solutions  
3. 3-Minute e-Learning Is Rapid Learning, Faster Application and Lower Cost  
5. e-Learning Architecture (e-LA)- Foundation for Rapid e-Learning  
6. More About e-Learning Architecture  
7. Approaches to e-Learning Architecture  
8. Basic e-Learning Architecture - Organic, Lightweight and Effective  
9. How to Make the Basic Architecture Work for Rapid Development?  
10. How to Transform Our e-Learning Architecture  
11. Software and Tools Serve the Purpose of e-Learning Architecture, Not the Other Way Around  
12. An Interactive Format Uses Simulation, Discovery, Cases or a Scenario-Based Approach  
13. Virtual Classroom (VC), e.g. WebEx, LiveMeeting, Breeze, etc.  
14. Online Reference Help and Guide  
15. Performance Support Systems and Knowledge Management  
16. Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS)  
17. Rapid e-Learning: Software Reusability and Rapid Production Process  
18. A Game Plan for Selection of Rapid Development Software  
19. Process and Collaboration for 3-Minute e-Learning Development  
20. Job Aids for the Development Team  
21. 3-Minute e-Learning and Beyond to Turbo-LMS, Rapid ADDIE and e-Learning Business Performance Metrics  
ix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. 3-Minute e-Learning Case Study: Reducing Costs to 30% and Increasing Speed by 300% of Development</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Future of 3-Minute e-Learning and Rapid e-Learning</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Summary</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Minute e-Learning: Organic e-Learning Design Process</td>
<td>B-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Minute e-Learning: Subject Matter Expert (SME) Interview Guide</td>
<td>C-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3-Minute e-Learning
Introduction
3-Minute e-Learning

Introduction

The purchase of YouTube by Google for $1.6 billion reminds us that a great many people in mainstream society access, share, collaborate, and learn from each other at faster speeds, with highly personalized experiences, and a lot of independence. This is the new world of Web 2.0 – social computing or social networking.

On the surface, it may seem ludicrous to correlate classroom training and e-Learning with YouTube joining Google. However, there are many indications that the very foundations of how we train people today are being significantly influenced or altered by the same behaviors and technologies that Google and YouTube cultivate. These two symbols of social computing and social networking have a profound impact on training and learning.

The challenge to leaders, trainers, instructional designers and developers continues to be: “How do we add value while we leverage rapidly changing technologies and modify our approaches to match new social computing behaviors?”

Addressing this question compels us to wrestle with the nuts and bolts of e-Learning: content development and delivery. How do we define and approach content as we deliver it through high speed Internet tools and in the world of Web 2.0? How do we develop content that suits the new learning and work behaviors of people in electronically connected workplaces?

*e-Learning landscape changes: e-Learning 2.0, “working and full proficiencies”*

The e-Learning landscape has changed. In our study of content development and delivery, two related changes provide insights that address the fundamental shifts.

First, web 2.0 and social networking tools have invaded the e-Learning field with tools, such as WIKIs, blogs, Federated Searches, Podcasts, RSS and other similar ones. Anthony Karrer, Ph.D., a leading expert in e-Learning systems development (www.techempower.com.com), speaks of e-Learning 2.0, as opposed to e-Learning 1.0 and e-Learning 1.3. (Please see Table 0-1). Karrer suggests that as the approach
moves into e-Learning 2.0, the content is reduced from 60 minutes in e-Learning 1.0 to 15 minutes in e-Learning 1.3 and just one minute in e-Learning 2.0.

The one minute of content in e-Learning 2.0 is provided by the worker or learner, whereas the content in e-Learning 1.0 is provided by instructional designers and trainers. In addition to WIKIs, blogs, searches, Podcasts, and RSS, learners contribute their own experiences and expertise-making content development – a collaborative process of the learners.

Karrer further suggests that e-Learning 2.0 does not replace e-Learning 1.0 or e-Learning 1.3, but, instead, provides new options in the already large array of e-Learning tools. Moreover, under the right conditions, implementing e-Learning 2.0 is a compelling option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Components</th>
<th>e-Learning 1.0</th>
<th>e-Learning 1.3</th>
<th>e-Learning 2.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ownership</td>
<td>Top-down, one-way</td>
<td>Top-down, some collaborative</td>
<td>Bottom-up, learner-driven, peer learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development time</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>Rapid</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content size</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
<td>15 minute</td>
<td>1 minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access time</td>
<td>Prior to work</td>
<td>In between work</td>
<td>During work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery</td>
<td>At one time</td>
<td>In many pieces</td>
<td>When you need it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content access</td>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>Email, intranet</td>
<td>Search, RSS feed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content creator</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>SME</td>
<td>User</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 0-1: e-Learning 2.0*

This table is provided with permission from Anthony Karrer, Ph.D. (www.techempower.com.com).
Second, in another development, at the Workforce Performance 2006 conference on September 11, 2006, Joe DiDonato, EVP - Chief Learning Technologies Officer for Countrywide Home Loans, Inc., presented his observations on the need to differentiate “working proficiency” from “full proficiency.” DiDonato explained:

“Given the tasks of training an individual to ‘full proficiency’ in a technical product, the education teams (instructional designers, trainers, developers) will do a complete decomposition of that product, and then proceed to train an employee on those product functions. This ritual of ‘full proficiency’ training ignores the fact that much of this knowledge will probably never be used that is frequently in the employee’s job, and in a lot of cases, simply forgotten once the employee leaves the classroom.”

Instead of full proficiency, DiDonato suggested focusing on “working proficiency,” that is, providing information that an employee needs to do the job immediately and most of the time. This distinction aids in deciding what tools are best suited to deliver the different levels of content.

Furthermore, DiDonato concluded that the classroom model is not an efficient model for dealing with the volume of information that needs to be processed in today’s organizations. He offered a mixture of solutions to reduce the time required to achieve “working proficiency.” DiDonato included classroom training as a tool to help in building skills to achieve “working proficiency.” However, he suggested that perhaps 80% of content can be accessed by learners through Federated Searches and wizards.
Performance-driven content versus boring content, bordering on really “crappy” content

Amidst these new shifts and developments, there is one remaining truth that will stay with us for a long while. Regardless of the technologies and the different ways people behave and learn, we still have to create, organize and deliver content. In businesses and nonprofit organizations, where content is in the fabric of their culture, the demand is even greater for rapid, small, and useful content. Both Karrer and DiDonato recognize the difficulties of organizing and making content available to learners rapidly, and they present technologies that may help to access them faster. e-Learning 2.0 broadens our suite of technologies, while the concept of “working proficiency” helps us to focus our content on performance.

The challenge with the Web 2.0 social networking and computing environment is that it is unstructured, promotes independence and empowers everyone to publish content, good or bad, useful or crappy. In our organizations, however, we need to provide content that has productive value to our workers. And productive value means useful content presented in a way that decreases the time needed for learning. Whether we apply e-Learning 2.0 tools, e-Learning 1.0 or 1.3, it is apparent that the technologies promote learning behaviors that operate in a rapid, need-to-know, and just-in-time environment.

What we see today in many e-Learning programs ranges from boring to really crappy content. With Web 2.0 and advances in digital and authoring tools, the content created only 3-5 years ago may become crappy very quickly, not because of visual quality and aesthetics, but because of its inability to provide learners with the content they need instantly to perform at work.

3-Minute e-Learning – rapid application, rapid development and rapid delivery

3-Minute e-Learning is not just a figurative title, but a practical yardstick.

In 3-Minute e-Learning, the basic structure of a learning snippet, nugget, lesson or vignette provides the compelling context (through a story, example, or case), key ideas, key applications and optional access to reference or detailed information. Learners study or access 3-Minute e-Learning and spend literally about three minutes with it.
The core of 3-Minute e-Learning is the encapsulation of “application points” or performance ideas, what DiDonato calls “working proficiency” knowledge. The “application points” are those segments of knowledge that enable the learner to apply the ideas to an actual work-related problem or situation rapidly. In essence, 3-Minute e-Learning is meant to help learners use knowledge instantly!

Incidentally, I am not suggesting that eight-hour classroom training should be reduced to 3-Minute e-Learning. Rather, that the “application points” or “working proficiency” knowledge is the core content presented in 3-Minute e-Learning.

Key shifts in thinking needed

Three fundamental thought processes must change to accomplish 3-Minute e-Learning:

1. Creating 3-Minute e-Learning is not about finding the software that produces content most rapidly. It is about rethinking and focusing on how to isolate the “application points” in the most bloated content and apply the step-by-step process of developing 3-Minute e-Learning to those “application points.”

2. It is only by going to the roots of performance outcomes, expectations and realities that we can identify the crucial “application points.” 3-Minute
e-Learning cannot be developed based on a job description, duties and responsibilities or task analysis.

3. Selecting Rapid e-Learning development software, authoring tools or an LMS will be easier, less costly, and more effective when we have taken into account items 1 and 2 above. Embracing a rapid development tool without defining the “application points” will not meet the goals of 3-Minute e-Learning, Rapid e-Learning and rapid application.

The benefits of 3-Minute e-Learning, rapid application and rapid development

3-Minute e-Learning helps us simplify our Rapid e-Learning efforts. It will increase our ability to add value to our organization by demonstrating lower production costs and faster development results.

1. 3-Minute e-Learning increases the speed with which learners apply the ideas, thereby impacting performance. This helps us add value to our organization’s needs.

2. We can position 3-Minute e-Learning not just as a course or a program, but as an immediate problem solving tool, for example, to help technicians in the field, cashiers in stores, managers who need to learn about specific skills, and salespeople who need updates on product changes. If we make the content too large or too bulky, we will lose this opportunity. Please see Appendix B.

3. 3-Minute e-Learning provides a clearly-defined process for working successfully with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). The process, which is contained in a series of interview questions in Appendix C, helps us direct the contributions of SMEs to a focused 3-Minute e-Learning snippet, nugget or vignette.

4. 3-Minute e-Learning reduces costs and increases productivity. With this methodology, as I will demonstrate in this book, we can reduce our development costs by 50% and increase the speed of development by 300%. In actual dollars, this means that a program built in a traditional fashion costing $50,000, will cost only $20,000 using the 3-Minute
e-Learning process, a savings of at least 60%. Please see Chapter 22.

5. One of the unintended consequences of 3-Minute e-Learning is that our content will be useful in the world of rapidly, random and self-directed learning, especially in Web 2.0 applications. 3-Minute e-Learning makes our content flexible, versatile and useful at three levels: e-Learning 1.0, 1.3 and 2.0. It will find its value in Knowledge Management Systems, Learning Management Systems, and virtual online tools such as WebEx or Breeze. It can also work well as a reference and searchable format.

With 3-Minute e-Learning as foundation of the content delivery, we enable the learners to search, bookmark and send email. Furthermore, we will be able to correlate e-Learning with performance metrics. This helps us see the impact of training in actual job performance. Please see Chapter 21.

**Relationship of 3-Minute e-Learning and Rapid e-Learning**

In this book I use the terms 3-Minute e-Learning and Rapid e-Learning interchangeably. The distinction, however is, 3-Minute e-Learning is the outcome while Rapid e-Learning is the process of accomplishing the outcome.

**3-Minute e-Learning and the pathways**

For the past few years, I have worked and advised many leaders in organizations on “how to produce content into small pieces.” I have also been involved in designing and implementing Learning Management Systems (LMS) to enhance their capacities to impact measurable performance. There seems to be a growing dissatisfaction with the first generation of e-Learning content and LMSs – classroom-like lessons and page turning, and the massive use of multimedia, simulation, interactivity and tracking – that needs to be addressed. 3-Minute e-Learning addresses that dissatisfaction.

Regardless of what we now do in e-Learning, 3-Minute e-Learning will help us take an honest look at how we can propel our e-Learning initiatives into a new e-Learning landscape, one that is inching faster and faster into our workplaces, faster than we can retool, reorganize and redesign.

3-Minute e-Learning provides the pathways in that landscape.
3-Minute e-Learning and Beyond to Turbo-LMS, Rapid ADDIE and e-Learning Business Performance Metrics
How do our LMSs perform and help us achieve our goals? In chapter 16 I shared with you my observation that most LMSs are “data processing” tools and not “learning” tools. Furthermore, LMSs are even further removed from helping learners apply ideas to improve actual job performance or solve problems since the knowledge and skills required are needed rapidly.

So far, many of us have been so busy and preoccupied with pushing content out the door, that we have left our LMSs untapped, underutilized or not providing the right strategy and direction.

Elliott Masie, a leading thinker in learning technologies (www.masie.com), and Josh Bersin of Bersin & Associates, a leading research firm (www.bersin.com), have interesting insights about the pitfalls of our current LMSs.

In Learning TRENDS, March 21, 2006, Elliott Masie presented his “18 Wishes for an LMS!” (Reprinted from Chief Learning Officer Magazine.)

Two of Masie’s wishes are relevant to our discussions here.

”Wish # 8. LMS, I want you to be more integrated with our business objectives. As we roll out new products, change our strategy, realign our workforce or add new customers, you need to be hooked into the process in real time."

”Wish # 10. LMS, I want you to handle the growing use of content at the object level. Business is moving fast and, often, the learning needs are small: just a chunk of the right content, now! Stop calling that a non-completion. It is a learning moment and a success."

Josh Bersin, in his keynote speech at the Workforce Performance 2006 Conference in Las Vegas, September 2006, reported that in the study that Bersin & Associates conducted, e-Learning had largely been rated by companies to have a high value contribution in meeting goals in compliance topic areas. However, companies
rated e-Learning to have a low value contribution in its ability to impact performance in companies.

The insights above are closely related. I think that as we push our LMSs to help learners use content rapidly in work situations for impacting performance or adapting skills to changes in strategies or new products, the content has to be necessarily small. “Just a chunk, content, now” as Masie says, or in our parlance, 3-Minute e-Learning. The problem, as I explained, is how do we break content into small sizes or snippets? We can’t just compress bloated content or chop it into smaller lessons, while still presenting all of it. Through the 3-Minute e-Learning, Organic e-Learning Design Process (Appendix B) and the appropriate e-Learning Architecture (e-LA), I emphasized that to produce chunks of content, we have to focus on finding the application points of the content that are useful to the learner to apply rapidly on the job. It is also crucial to match the content with the right e-LA model.

3-Minute e-Learning provides a sound foundation to bridge e-Learning and knowledge content to the demands of rapid performance in actual work situations. 3-Minute e-Learning enables the learner to use the content, whether it is deployed in e-Learning 1.0, e-Learning 1.3, or e-Learning 2.0. Furthermore, 3-Minute e-Learning and the sound e-Learning Architecture (e-LA) allow us to connect knowledge with relevant job performance metrics. It is possible to see how e-Learning can really impact performance by correlating job tasks specific to
3-Minute e-Learning with critical metrics in the organization. I call this “e-Learning Business Performance Metrics.”

Let me share with you some perspectives and case examples. In the discussions below, I show that converting much of our content into 3-Minute e-Learning helps us take advantage of many advances of Learning 2.0, Web 2.0 and enhancements to LMSs. I am not suggesting that 3-Minute e-Learning is an instrumental concept before we can use the new developments in technologies. Rather, the 3-Minute e-Learning format of content facilitates our ability to use our e-Learning investment in the rapid learning mode.

I have opted to organize and present this information into three groups:

1. Facility for speed, access, collaboration and knowledge sharing
2. Rapid, real-time, dynamic, ADDIE
3. Performance metrics-driven learning

**Facility for speed, access, collaboration and knowledge sharing**

Online learners or those doing work using digital tools and Internet solutions exhibit e-Learning Behaviors® (Chapter 5). They prefer to have quick access to short lessons, as well as quick exits, random access, and finding solutions to solve problems and continually search for application ideas. In essence, these learners pursue what engages them or what the demands are from work situations.

e-Learning Behaviors® are even more apparent in situations where e-Learning 2.0 tools, such as WIKI, Blog, bookmarking, Instant Messaging, iPods, and others, are being used for social networking and collaboration. Since 3-Minute e-Learning is small and has stand-alone content, learners can search quickly (effective search requires that the content is tagged with the key words), bookmark their favorite lessons and email the URL (Web address) of the 3-Minute e-Learning. Additionally, learners can link the URL in WIKIs and Blogs. These behaviors are possible since the 3-Minute e-Learning content is designed to be small to allow for quick study. It is difficult to imagine online learners doing the above activities when the content is encapsulated in a large and long-winded program.
In essence, 3-Minute e-Learning facilitates these capabilities:

- Share knowledge to help, coach or support others quickly
- Share knowledge to complement formal training
- Access knowledge instantly to perform tasks as needed
- Organize learning in a very personalized manner

In “Social Life of Information” (2000), John Selly Brown observes that people and organizations lose a great amount of learning opportunities from informal sharing and networking due to the over-reliance on information technology. There is a lot of learning by people moving cubicle to cubicle and asking for ideas or solutions from other colleagues or associates. e-Learning 2.0 and Web 2.0 social computing and networking are the tools that enable people to exchange ideas instantly and informally. However, much of the knowledge being shared is experience-based and informal. Most formal learning content is not shared easily because it is difficult to search and find relevant information quickly.

**Turbo-charge our LMSs: Search, bookmark favorites and email links**

Although search, bookmark favorites and email link functions are common in many web based applications, most LMSs do not have these capabilities. First, these tools are against the “religions” of traditional instructional designers and trainers. They want learners to learn from A to Z in a linear fashion, the “full proficiency” model, as I mentioned earlier. Second, most e-Learning content is constructed as one solid learning media (like Flash) that makes it hard if not impossible to search the content. Thus, application points cannot be isolated for quick sharing.

If content were organized in 3-Minute e-Learning formats, the search, bookmark favorites and email link functions would make
sense or become practical. We can therefore Turbo-charge our LMSs. We can make our 3-Minute e-Learning content much more accessible and realize a higher payback from our investments.

Figures 21.1 The LMS allows learners to search all programs assigned to them and bookmark topics that are of interest to them.

Figures 21.2 Learners are able to send an email with the URL of the bookmarked topic. Provided the recipient is registered in the system, he or she can access the bookmarked topic immediately.
Rapid, real-time, and dynamic ADDIE

Are ISD (Instructional Systems Design) and ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) dead?

The souls of ISD and ADDIE are alive. But the body, its implementation, methods and processes are old, dead and must be buried. Many of us have abandoned ADDIE because it is cumbersome, takes too long and is costly. But the stake through ADDIE's heart is the persistent practice of rushing content development and delivery because of pressures of internal clients. “We are done with the software. Please take this week to develop the training.” “We need to train 500 people in 2 weeks.” “We don’t have the time – Just train people on what I tell you to!”

So, OK, for now. As leaders, instructional designers, developers and trainers, we don’t have much of a choice in most cases. But do we abandon ADDIE totally? Are the principles of ADDIE necessary to achieve good learning and training goals?

I believe that ADDIE is with us, alive and well. We don’t recognize it as ADDIE. We don’t even think of it as a valid application of ADDIE. In e-Learning 2.0, ADDIE has moved from the instructional designers’ to the learners’ control. Learners assess, design, develop, implement and evaluate learning. They do all of these in a rapid, real-time, as-it-happens, dynamic process. Learners constantly assess their needs on the job. They search quickly for answers and solutions in content or through other people (design and develop). Learners apply (implement) the found answers and solutions. They evaluate to see if the solution works or not. Then, they repeat the process or do a random simultaneous process. One does not know where the beginning or ending lies. What matters is that they use the content and knowledge to solve problems and get results.

This type of behavior is similar to what Masie and DiDonato call learning with your “digital tribe.” While doing work in front of a computer, a worker may have Google open, 10 Instant Messaging conversations, and a reference guide ready. Or a salesperson opens her notebook in a client’s office to demonstrate a point, opens her Blackberry or Treo to access the web for new pricing or to access contact information. In both cases, learning and doing are intertwined and ADDIE is actively being practiced.
Now, what is the role of 3-Minute e-Learning in Rapid ADDIE? In many of our current e-Learning designs, which are bloated with content, cumbersome and encapsulated in one file, it is impossible to efficiently use the application points of the content. In fact, no one really wants to go back to or study the e-Learning again because in the Internet high-speed world, it takes too much time. Moreover, it’s inefficient to go back through the e-Learning page by page and look for the content.

Additionally, with very bloated content, we cannot provide learners a quick way of assessing the relevancy or value of the content.

To help the rapid learning demands of learners, using the illustration in Figures 21.3 and 21.4, I will show how I designed and applied in an LMS project the Ranking for Relevancy and Organic Presentation of content to learners. A fundamental assumption here is that all content is in 3-Minute e-Learning snippets, nuggets or vignettes.

This is how it works:

1. All snippets are rated by learners as to whether the content is relevant, 1 being the lowest and 10 being highly relevant (Figure 21.3);

2. The data is collected in the database.

3. With the data information stored, learners have the option to access by “Relevancy,” which shows the learners the list of snippets according to relevancy and value. The LMS organically suggests or presents the ranking to the learner.

4. Learners can then study the top-rated snippets and may not bother with the low-rated ones (Figure 21.4).

In Rapid ADDIE, we are encouraging the learners to do most of the work. This is similar to what Masie refers to as adding the Amazon.com experience to our learning programs.

What does the relevancy rating provide the trainer, leader and instructional designer? It provides them the opportunity to see which topics are of high value
and which ones are low. The information indicates what we may want to augment, improve, do more of or delete in the content. So, we have the chance to assess, evaluate, and, then, design and develop more content.

Figures 21.3 Learners rank the relevancy or usefulness of the snippet or lesson. The data is collected and compiled.

Figures 21.4 The ranking data is collected and presented to the learner as another option or alternative to view the 3-Minute e-Learning snippets. Learners can click “View” to study the snippet.
Performance metrics-driven learning

I personally like the new developments in e-Learning 2.0. WIKIs, Blogs, Mash-ins, Instant Messaging and others are great tools to personalize learning and increase the speed of knowledge sharing. I anticipate there will be more social networking tools in the years to come as bandwidth speed improves and portable and mobile devices become more affordable. This is truly an exciting period for training.

As I ponder these new developments, I ask this question:

“What has happened to relating e-Learning to business or organizational performance?”

Unfortunately, I see very little progress in this area.

How does 3-Minute e-Learning relate to the issue of business performance?

The case below is an example of how 3-Minute e-Learning helped in linking to or making it possible to set up e-Learning Business Performance Metrics. This was done for one of my clients, a large financial consulting firm. The client had several thousand investment advisors who needed to be continually trained.

The problems were stated as follows:

- “We don’t want to waste time in training, especially unneeded training, since my staff must produce revenues of $50,000 per hour.”

- “We want training that we can correlate to performance metrics and gives us a way to gauge the relationship of training and key performance indicators.”

My challenge as consultant was to figure out a way to train the advisors only on what impacted measurable performance directly. The team (client, trainers and consultants) first asked the question, “What do we need to train them on?” Eventually, we realized that we were asking the wrong question. The solution became clear when we changed our question to: “What performance areas do we need to improve?” It became obvious that we needed to narrow down specific content and convert it into smaller sizes called snippets to train the advisors on
the measurable areas. The idea of “training-on-need” or “training-on-exception” became the accepted principle.

In Figure 21.5, you see a screen capture of a manager’s report displaying the Performance Metrics of one of the advisors. The right column displays the few key Performance Metrics. The Performance displays the measurable performance of the advisor, which is updated in real time. (The data was integrated into the LMS as it happened, collected from the in-house financial performance system.) On the left side, the related e-Learning Snippets are presented with indications of completion, timeliness, pre and post and number of attempts. Each snippet is 2-3 minutes long.

![Image of a manager’s report displaying Performance Metrics and e-Learning Snippets](image)

Figure 21.5 The e-Learning and Performance Metrics is an enhancement of an LMS. The enhancement has been made possible because the content are in smaller snippets, 3-Minute e-Learning.

This report was presented to learners and managers alike as part of their e-Learning dashboard. The report also sent out email alerts and notices of the exceptions where learners were falling behind both in performance and recommended learning snippets. They were given recommendations for possible study. Upon viewing this report, managers were able to intervene and coach learners on both the performance issues and related learning gaps. The system also provided a coaching tool.
Managers could then generate a before-and-after report if the assigned learning helped in the performance areas. This report was known as “Snapshots of Learning Performance.” It showed the variances and improvements before and after recommended learning. A correlation was done to the extent of showing how the learning snippets were helping performance. The Performance Metrics tool was an enhancement, which I introduced into the client’s LMS.

The concept of correlating performance and e-Learning was made easy because there was a breakthrough in thinking. The instructional design team members radically changed their minds – converting large programs and discovering the application points for the snippets. This was a breakthrough because it took less time to build the Performance Metrics once the design and delivery of the snippets was the approach agreed on. The initial opposition to designing snippets as stand-alone almost caused the project to falter.

As a reference, we used Return on Learning, a book written by Samir Desai and his associates from Accenture (www.accenture). It is a good reference on how they tried to use Performance Metrics in learning and determining returns.

I admit that the concept of correlating training and performance in this case could be open to criticism because it did not follow the rigid data collection and analysis methodologies of formal research. The process was more a matter of gauging or making an “intelligent estimate or guess” of the correlation between learning and performance. My client was pleased with the outcome because it was practical, easy, real-time and useful, exactly what they needed. The client abhorred the suggestion of making a long, tedious, and costly ROI study, as suggested earlier in the project.

The concept of correlating e-Learning with Performance Metrics is applicable in situations where specific measurable outcomes for tasks or jobs are collected, stored and used as a day-to-day management tool. Examples are:

- Business consulting – measuring billable and non-billable hours and types of engagements
- Customer support – length of calls, speed of resolutions and complaints or repeat calls
• Sales – number of sales in pipeline, projected turnover, contract rate, applications rate, etc.

• Manufacturing – scrap rate, turnaround rate, etc.

• Healthcare – number of patients or cases managed per hour, cost of delivery of service per patient, etc.

“Provocative Innovations”

In terms of Elliott Masie’s concept of “provocative innovations,” it would take a head-twisting, mind-numbing and backbreaking exercise to make a change in our paradigms. But once we succeed in making the change, we discover a whole new world of possibilities. Moving away from bloated content to 3-Minute e-Learning is one of those exercises we need to pursue.
3-Minute e-Learning Case Study: Reducing Costs to 30% and Increasing Speed by 300% of Development
3-Minute e-Learning Case Study

Reducing Costs to 30% and Increasing Speed by 300% of Development

In this book I have postulated that e-Learning is inherently rapid and has the capability and potential to produce 3-Minute e-Learning formats. Largely, the demand for Rapid e-Learning is born from the dissatisfaction of organizations. They complain that e-Learning is slow, costly and cumbersome to implement. Furthermore, I have argued that e-Learning today has not fulfilled the expectations of creating impact on business performance. Although e-Learning has cut the high cost of training delivery, it has not provided convincing evidence that it contributes to what matters in business – performance!

To address these issues, I have proposed that we rethink the way we approach e-Learning development by making a shift to 3-Minute e-Learning. Fundamentally, I have stressed that learners are not interested in learning from bloated, boring and time-consuming e-Learning programs. They exhibit e-Learning Behaviors®. They seek out “application points” or performance ideas in all the content they use. Learners have better use for knowledge that provides them with “working proficiency.” Their purpose is to apply the ideas instantly in resolving problems and getting results rapidly in their work.

To make the shift from bloated and heavy content to 3-Minute e-Learning, which is light, lean and performance-focused content, I have suggested that we formalize our e-Learning Architecture (e-LA) to conform with the Organic e-Learning Design Principle:

Learners look for “application points” to apply ideas instantly. Invariably, it is also the cheapest and fastest way to rapidly develop 3-Minute e-Learning.

Focusing on “application points” allows us the opportunity to cut to the chase. We are able to cut out unnecessary use of time, multimedia, software and complex design that develops the wrong parts of the content. We can apply these resources sparingly on “application points.” “Application points” are best displayed in...
3-Minute e-Learning formats. By doing so, we provide the learners the focus on knowledge that boosts “working proficiency.”

Case study

To illustrate how to apply 3-Minute e-Learning in the real-world, let me share with you a case study regarding one of our projects. We have repeatedly observed the same outcomes in applying the principles of 3-Minute e-Learning in numerous organizations. Although this case covers a service-oriented company, the lessons learned are applicable to other types of companies and topics.

The problem

The organization we worked with wanted to implement a customer service program for its staff handling in-bound service calls. They had actually begun delivering the program in classroom training as part of the orientation process. The classroom training program took five days. The company was experiencing very high staff turnover in the in-bound sales department. One practical solution to deliver training was to provide an e-Learning solution. Another problem was that the pricing and product information had to be constantly updated and the company felt an e-Learning approach would allow a faster way to update customer support staff on the changes.
Knee-jerk solution

The client organization had decided to convert the existing classroom participant material to an e-Learning format. Since John (the manager) wanted this done rapidly, an in-house Flash developer (Greg) suggested that using Flash would be a logical approach. It would be simple to copy the Word document version of the classroom training materials and display them in Flash. So, in a day, Greg converted a few pages of the content into Flash. The initial result was delivered as a slideshow. Participants could click forward and backward buttons to preview the lessons. John thought that this was not engaging or close to what he envisioned to be a good interactive training. “This will make the staff go to sleep,” John said.

It dawned on the team members that it was not effective to simply copy the content from the training manual and turn it into a slide show. They felt the need to develop some interactivity, such as role playing, to help learners identify, for example, the types of complaints from callers. John felt strongly about making this program very interactive and engaging. “Please prepare a plan that is not a knee-jerk solution,” John added.

Too slow, too late and not affordable

With help from the instructional designer, writer, graphic artists and voice-over talent, Greg presented a plan. Based on estimates, the Flash program would have these components:

Seven lessons, each with an interactive design:

a. How to greet the caller
b. How to identify the problems of the caller
c. Where to locate answers to caller’s questions
d. How to handle the problems
e. How to communicate product changes and pricing
f. How to close the call
g. How to record the incident in the CRM (customer relationship management software)
The interactive design:

- Eight role-playing exercises (using Flash, 3 minutes each)
- Four interviewing-the-customer games (using Flash, 3 minutes each)
- Seven interactive test games (using Flash, 5 minutes each)
- Seven narrated slideshows, one for each lesson, an average of 15 pages each, or 90 frames
- 60 photos and images

John was quite impressed with the plan. However, seeing the costs of $75,000 and 60 days of development, he was certain it was not within his budget and would not meet the 15-day timeline for delivery. Suddenly, panic was in the air.

Prior to this, John and I had met at another company function. John called me to arrange for a meeting. He requested that my team and I explore whether or not this program could be done in 3 weeks for $25,000. However, he wanted to keep as much interactivity as possible to make the program engaging.

Fast, cheap - hmmm,
Let’s see if we get lucky!

After the initial meetings with John and his team, these were our findings and discoveries:
1. Since there was a strong push to get the program delivered quickly, the fastest way was to transfer the classroom hand-out material. “The classroom version has worked for two years and the materials should do well for e-Learning”, John told us.

2. The team depended on the Flash developer for his expertise in multimedia marketing presentations. He was very helpful and easy to work with.

3. The instructional designer was reluctant to go back to the Subject Matter Expert (SME) because the SME already provided the most recent updates on the content. Beside, all of the information required for the training was in the current training manual.

4. Overall, John and the e-Learning team were capable and enthusiastic about the project. The single biggest frustration was that there wasn’t enough time and budget to do the job right. They were very receptive and anxious to find ways to deliver the programs faster since it had become a pattern in their company that every internal client wanted e-Learning programs for them done yesterday.

3-Minute e-Learning approach

We requested a half-day session to define the needs and discover solutions. We had two productive brainstorming sessions.

The initial reluctance came from Nancy, the instructional designer. Nancy did not feel comfortable conducting another interview with the SMEs. “We would look foolish and would waste the time of the SME,” she said. However, after further review of the SME Discovery Guide (Appendix C), it was the consensus that going back to the SME was not a redundant process, but rather a focused process by asking questions related to application points and organic illustrations. The objective of interviewing the SME was to prioritize, categorize and discover the top 20% performance issues.

The team agreed to review and implement the 3-Minute e-Learning approach. The findings helped them figure out the most pressing issues of the inbound service calls.
Performance logs and audio recordings

After interviewing the SMEs, the team reported that it was relatively easy to ask the SME questions about finding the application points and prioritizing issues on working proficiencies. The SME reviewed with the team the in-bound support record and some recorded audio sessions between the customer and the support staff. “This was very insightful. The logs and interviews made it easy to discover that there are top issues that needed more attention than others,” Nancy commented happily.

These were the key findings of our team:

1. The critical problem areas were learning how to find the new product features, how the pricing affects the customers and the consequent adjustments in the invoicing information. Customers needed the information quickly to adjust their pricing and pass the costs to their end buyers. A slow response in this area would increase the loss of customers.

2. It was important to learn how to review the purchasing and ordering patterns of the customer, so that the in-bound service staff could offer the newest updates on the product that could help customers get more profits from the products.

3. Representing the internal client, the head of the customer support staff informed the e-Learning team that these issues heavily did impact performance of the service staff. The skills required and considered critical would be in these areas. “This is the 20% of the skills requirements that create the 80% results,” John noted.

4. When we reviewed the outline of the lessons with the internal client and SME, the internal client confirmed that only two topics should be at the top of the lists, while others would just be nice to have. The two lessons were:
   a. How to handle the problems
   b. How to communicate product changes and pricing

Furthermore, these two topic areas were the sources of the most errors, difficulties in learning, and often the most troublesome customer support issues. The SME
suggested that presenting case scenarios and ways to resolve these issues would probably be where the training would get the “biggest bang for their buck.”

It was also agreed to spend less time developing a full set of training lessons for those lessons not listed in the priority topics. “Participants can learn these topics by going through the CRM software reference help section or learn on the job by coaching and the use of printed job-aids”, according to the internal client.

**The big aha!**

Interviewing the SME was not a difficult process because we prioritized the most important issues. The Internal client was a big help since he provided direction on what mattered in their operations. He actually directed the SME not to be too technical, but more business-focused.

The alternative design was produced for $18,500, down from $75,000, and it was delivered in two weeks.

The new lesson design is shown below.

Seven lessons:

(Each lesson is an interactive design (text instructions, graphics and references).

- How to greet the caller (text instructions, graphics and references)
- How to identify the problems of the caller (text instructions, graphics and references)
- Where to locate answers to caller’s questions (text instructions, graphics and references)
- How to handle the problems (1 slide show and flow chart)
- How to communicate product changes and pricing (twelve small scenario cases; simple Flash exercises; short case studies presented using graphics, audio recorded playback from actual cases, text and selection of right choices and insights for each scenario).
- How to close the call (text instructions and references)
3-Minute e-Learning

g. How to record the incident in the CRM (customer relationship management software) (text instructions and references)

The interactive design

a. Twelve role playing exercises (using simple Flash exercises, 2 minutes each)
b. One slideshow, narrated, using Flash (3 minutes)
c. 60 photos and images
d. 20 HTML pages with reference text from the CRM help guide

It was decided that each scenario and lesson should take about three minutes or less.

The big aha! was:

“We produced a high value program, short and concise, at a faster speed and much lower cost.”
3-Minute e-Learning
Organic e-Learning Design Process®

Ray E. Jimenez, Ph.D.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overriding Principle and Purpose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The e-Learning Implementation Process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Common Pitfalls in e-Learning Course Development</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Step Development Process</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1 - Analyzing and Categorizing Content</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of Content</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying “MUST LEARNS” in 3-Minute e-Learning</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Content - “Mechanics” and “Organics”</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2 - Developing Lesson Pages</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3 - Developing Interface &amp; Interactive Design</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4 - Selecting Delivery Methods for Programs, Modules, and Lessons</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5 - Preparing Budgets and Documentation for Lesson Pages</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3-Minute e-Learning and Organic e-Learning Design Process

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2. If you need more assistance or you wish to contact Ray Jimenez, please send an email to rjimenez@vignettestraining.com
3-Minute e-Learning

Organic e-Learning Design Process

By Ray E. Jimenez, Ph.D.

Overriding Principle

The key principle that guides the Organic e-Learning Design Process is this: "Learners look for application points to apply ideas instantly. Invariably, it is also the cheapest and fastest way to rapidly develop e-Learning programs."

The Organic e-Learning Design Process provides the detailed step-by-step procedure to accomplish the principle. 3-Minute e-Learning is the outcome.

Purpose

Organic e-Learning Design helps you in:

1. Understanding the principles and concepts to guide e-Learning course design and development that meets the learner’s and the organization’s needs.

2. Implementing the mechanics and procedures covered in the course design and development.

3. Learning how to use the design process as the basis for developing 3-Minute e-Learning and e-Learning Architecture (e-LA) and determining systems and software requirements of the project.

4. Learning the skills and mind-set required to produce sound e-Learning courses.

5. Producing a budget, timeline and documentation that you can provide to developers or vendors.
The flow chart below covers the total e-Learning implementation process. Organic e-Learning Design Process pertains to the development of 3-Minute e-Learning snippets, nuggets, chunks and vignettes.
The Common Pitfalls In e-Learning Course Development

1. Migrating to e-Learning those courses designed for classroom training or print delivery.

2. Purchasing software before defining the e-Learning course design.

3. Designing and developing e-Learning programs without understanding the principles of e-Learning Behaviors and the nature of Internet technologies.

4. Adapting traditional instructional design in e-Learning course development without critical thought.

5. Fatal mistake
   Developing an e-Learning program to fit specific software without going through the design process. It’s costly and presents constraints in realizing the full benefits of e-Learning.
Avoiding the Common Pitfalls In e-Learning Course Development

There is a need to clearly understand that before applying a software solution, these three conditions must be met:

a. An instructional thought process or design is undertaken.

b. The instructional thought or design is documented and communicated.

c. A plan is developed with costing and timelines based on the instructional thought or design.

It is only with the above information that you would have a clear idea of what and how to transform the content into 3-Minute e-Learning.

The purpose of Appendix B is to provide a step-by-step guide in achieving these three preconditions.
There are five essential steps to prepare a sound design for 3-Minute e-Learning programs. The process starts with analysis of content and ends in developing technical specifications for each lesson page.

Steps 1 and 2 fall under **Organic Design Decisions**

Steps 3, 4 and 5 fall under **Organic Production Process**

1. Analyzing and Categorizing Content
2. Developing Lesson Pages
3. Developing Interface and Interactive Design
4. Selecting the Methods and Tools
5. Preparing Budgets and Documentation for Lesson Pages
5-Step Development Process

These are the details of each step.

Steps 1 and 2 fall under Organic Design Decisions

Steps 3, 4 and 5 fall under Organic Production Process

1. Analyzing and Categorizing Content
   Breaking down content into organized and relevant parts and pieces. This categorization helps trainers lay out content on lesson pages to enable learners to have better control of the learning process.

2. Developing Lesson Pages
   The content is laid out on the appropriate type of pages with relationship of thought and content carefully considered to ensure that learning starts with “must learn” topics and then moves to “in-depth and detailed” content. Covered here are: Laying out pages, and writing and designing e-Learning programs.

3. Developing Interface and Interactive Design
   The content and the pages are tested and converted into a schematic that guides in the development of navigation, flow and relationships of the different elements.

4. Selecting The Methods and Tools
   This process allows trainers to evaluate and assess the types of tools and methods they wish to employ to achieve the program goals.

5. Preparing Budgets and Documentation for Lesson Pages
   This final step helps trainers and developers convey their design into documentation that contains the features, functions and systems requirements as well as costing and timing. This step bridges the e-Learning process to software selection and development process.
Step 1 - Analyzing and Categorizing Content

To prepare, write, edit, convert, modify or adjust content for e-Learning, follow the 5-Step Development Process. The design process should be guided by the results of the readiness and viability studies and e-Learning strategy decisions.

This approach in developing e-Learning programs is based on the discoveries about how learners learn, how they find and apply “application points”, and e-Learning Behaviors.

NOTE:
A lesson is a unit of knowledge that contains an understandable body of information. A lesson may be delivered in 3-Minute e-Learning. Before you start with (A), break down your program into an outline with modules and lessons. Lessons contain small or granular ideas, snippets or vignettes of your content. Once you have identified a lesson, proceed with (A).

A  Structure of Content

B  Analysis of Content

C  Nature of Content
3-Minute e-Learning  Organic e-Learning Design®

Step 1 - Analyzing and Categorizing Content

A  Structure of Content

Categorize modules and lesson content into 3-Minute e-Learning:

1. Performance outcomes, principles, key ideas ("application points")
2. Processes, tasks, steps, procedures
3. Tools, references, forms
4. People relationships and coordination

You will observe that a typical program consists of approximately 10-20% content that is type (1), while 80% of the content falls into types (2), (3), and (4).

In 3-Minute e-Learning and Organic e-Learning Design, the focus is on performance outcomes. Focusing the e-Learning development on the 20% content reduces the "bloat" and costs of production. It also speeds up development.

The benefits

What benefits can be gained from discovering the structure of your content and focusing on performance content?

1. It allows you to prioritize content and training activities that have higher impact on performance or results.
2. It helps learners focus quickly on learning that truly matters for their respective jobs.
3. It allows you to save time and money. You can allocate the right e-Learning media, tools and solutions to match the type of content.

The only way to identify "application points" is to understand the Structure of Content.

"Application Points" Pyramid

---

20%  
Performance outcomes, principles, key ideas

80%  
Processes, tasks, steps, procedures  
Tools, references, forms  
People relationships and coordination

---

Application Point or Performance Idea
Structure of Content - Exercise # 1A
Macro view of content

**Purpose:** This exercise helps you identify the categories of content from a macro view. The table of contents provides us a clue of the categories of content.

**Activity:** Write down in the space provided which item in the table of contents would fall under what category.

Presented below is an example of the structure of content.
(This is a fictitious table of contents of a program).

A program wants to train bank tellers what to do in the event of a robbery.

These are some of the contents of the program:

1. How to prepare an accident/incident report.
2. How to stay calm.
3. How to assess and identify potential hold-uppers.
4. How to call the police.
5. How to trigger the alarm.
6. How to help customers stay calm.
7. How to use the reference guide to report the incident.
8. How to understand the laws on company liabilities in case customers are hurt.
9. What the bank insurance covers in this type of incident.
10. How to make sure everyone is safe, including you.
11. Who to call or report to if you notice suspicious persons.

**Activity Form**

1. Performance outcomes, principles, key ideas ("application points")

2. Processes, tasks, steps, procedures

3. Tools, references, forms

4. People relationships and coordination

5. Performance measures, criteria, standards
3-Minute e-Learning
Bibliography
Blended Online and Classroom Workshop

I 3-Minute e-Learning
Research foundations in the formulation of assumptions and practices reported in this book.


3-Minute e-Learning
Index
# Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-Minute e-Learning</th>
<th>Authoring, 4,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application points, 7</td>
<td>Authoring software, 6, 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic structure, 7</td>
<td>Falling in love with, 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits, 7</td>
<td>Selection, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost reduction, 8</td>
<td>Cost calculator, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition, 7, 25</td>
<td>LMS, 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster application, 25</td>
<td>Reusable, 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing speed, 8</td>
<td>Coding, 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways, 9</td>
<td>Bank case study, B-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality, 25</td>
<td>Bersin &amp; Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating, exercises, B-15</td>
<td>Instructional design, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of delivery, B-53</td>
<td>Virtual classroom, 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration, 151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LMS, 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/80 Rule, B-18, B-21, B-36</td>
<td>Behavioral Learning, 104, B-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing, 29, 69</td>
<td>Blogs, 3, 171,177,197, B-42, B-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule, 81, 187</td>
<td>Bookmark, 4, 9, 151, 171, 172, 204, B-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study, 188</td>
<td>Boring programs-content,  6, 31, 62, 103,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Page turners, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifeless, B-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budgeting, cost estimates, B-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDIE - Rapid</td>
<td>Case-Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond, Rapid ADDIE, 168, 174, 194, 204</td>
<td>Classroom training, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic, B-53</td>
<td>Reducing costs, increasing speed, 183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotes, 195, B-24, B-28, B-40</td>
<td>Organics, B-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methods, B-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application points, 7, 29,</td>
<td>Certifications, B-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study, 183</td>
<td>Coach, 78, 120, 153, 172, 178, 189, B-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant access, 33</td>
<td>Colorful, 30,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying attention, 30</td>
<td>Humorous, B-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality standards, 195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic design, B-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyramid, B-12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors, 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic e-LA, 69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing, 76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting interactivity, 101</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding, 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlate performance metrics, 179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance logs, 188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality standards, 195</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micro-content, 198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments, 78, 82, B-38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collaboration, 21, 107, 120, 133, 171, 196, 204
Key features, 152
Process, 21, 151
Links to, B-38

Conceptual training, 104, B-25

Content, 3,
70% cumbersome, 10
ADDIE, 174
Analyzing, B-10
Architecture, 42
Basic architecture, 70
Behaviors, 65
Bloated, 10
Boring, 62
Catastrophe, 30
Categorizing, B-18
Crappy, 7
Digitalization, 44
Facility, 171
Hierarchy, B-34
Images, 83
Instructional design, 63
LCMS, 125
Mechanical and technical, 64, 78
Mechanical, devoid of life, 64
Organics, 64
Performance driven, 6
Performance support, 122
Reference tools, 114
Reusable, 143
Simulation, 101
SME, 20, 80
Software, 95
Structure of, B-13
Writer checklist, 75, 85

Contextual, 64, B-23

Concrete
Organics, B-23

Content Developer
Checklist, 85

Compliance training, 169, C-9, B-25

Coordination, B-12

Cost reduction, 36, 193
Alternative design, case, 189
Reducing costs 30%, 183

Credible, B-23

Critical thinking
Learners, 195

Cross, Jay, 196

Cultural barriers, 21

Database
Integration, 144, 148
Learners, 120
LMS, 125
ADDIE, 175

Decision making, B-25

Design
Appealing design, 62
Interactive, 146
Navigation, 147
Root cause bad design, 61

Discussion rooms, B-38
Documentation checklist, B-56
Downloads, 76, B-38
Drill down details, B-38
Dublin, Lance, 198
e-Learning 2.0, 1.0, 1.3, 3
  Catastrophe making, 31
e-Learning Architecture (e-LA)
  Approached in e-LA, 7
  Basic, 60
  How to develop, 65
  How to make it work, 69
  Transforming, writing, 76
  Definition, 41
  Framework, 14
  Garbage-in, garbage out, 20
  Software, tools, 93
  What is a good e-LA, 49
e-Learning
  Project development flow, 15, B-6
  Implementation, 199
  Course development, B-5
  Fatal mistake, B-7
  Pitfalls, B-8
  5-Step process, B-9
  Methods, B-25
  Methods of delivery, B-53
e-Learning Behaviors
  Definition, 56
  Learners needs, 44
  Email alerts, B-53
Emotional
  Organics, B-23
  Learning, B-42
Facilitating learning, B-41
Flexible, learning, B-34
Future of 3-Minute e-Learning
  Future, 193
“Future of Work” 2000
  Thomas Malone, 44
eLearning Guild Study
  Rapid e-Learning demand, 45
  Study report, A-1
Evaluations
  Reviews and evaluations, 88
Google
  Basic e-LA, 1, 61, 114, 174, 199
  YouTube, 1
  HTML, 43, 69, 94, 102, 155, 190
  Design, 190
  HTML, B-37
Illustrations, B-24
Instant Messaging, 171, 177, 196, B-42
Interface design, 79, B-51
Images
  Design, 190
  Developing, 83
Informal learning, 196, B-53
Instructional Design, 3, 30, 63, 791, 143, 172, 186, 198
Beyond, Rapid ADDIE, 174
Flexible, nimble, 42
Interactivity
Adding, 21
Criteria for selecting, 101
Different types, 104
Interactive engine, 146
Interactive design, B-10, B-51
Links to, B-38
In-depth, B-42
Types of,
Basic and advance, B-42

Selecting, 20
Turbo-LMS, 171
Work around, rapid, 128
Third generation, 197
Learning objects, B-34
Transferable, B-34

Lesson pages, B-33
Developing, B-33
Basic structure, B-41

Job Aids
Development, 157

Linear
Catastrophe, 31

Joe DiDonto, 5, 200

Link pages, B-38
Jump pages, B-38

Jump pages, B-38

Masie, Elliott, 180
LMS wish, 169
New LMS, 198

Just-in-time performance, B-53

Meaningful
Organics, B-23

Karrer, Anthony, 1

Knowledge Management, 9, 55,117, 135

Knowledge Mapping, 104, B-42

Mechanical content, B-23

Learning Communities, B-53

Metaphors, B-24

Learning
Contextual, best, 64
Different methods, B-25

Micro content, 198
Must Learns, B-18
Criteria, B-22
Layout, B-43

Learning Management System (LMS), 9
Life cycle, 127
LMS Flow Chart, 127
LMS, LCMS, 125

Mobile learning, 177, 197, B-53
MS Office
Word, Excel, PowerPoint, B-38

Note taking, Journals, B-53
Online Help & Reference
   e-LA, 113
   Reference tools, 114
   Search, Bookmark, 115

Organic e-Learning Design
   Better, cheaper, 29
   Principle, 29
   Design process, B-5
   Principles, B-5
   Organics, B-23
   Criteria, B-23
   Stories, B-23
   Types of, B-24
   Steps in developing, B-27

On-the-jobs training (OJT)
   Links, 78
   OJT, Links, B-38

PDF, 69, 78, 86, 135, B-38, B-53

Performance logs, audio, 188

Performance Metrics
   Driven learning, 177
   Impact on training, 9
   Impacts, 189
   Methods, B-53
   Accenture, 179

Performance, 5, C-4,
   3-Minute e-Learning 14
   Application points, 7, 31, 46
   Boring, 46
   Content, 6
   e-LA, 50
   Essential, 101

Inability, 26
   Impacting, 8
   LMS, 125, 170
   Must learn, 69
   SME, 79
   Writing, 76, 80

Performance Support
   And Knowledge Management, Salient features, 120
   e-LA, 119
   Rapid e-Learning, 122
   Weaknesses, 121
   Personalized learning, 196
   Personalization, B-53

PowerPoint, 55, 63, 77, 94, 107, 135, A-13, B-38
   Procedures, B-12
   Proficiency, 5, 203
   Full, B-38, 172
   Working, 3, 183

Project management
   Collaboration, 154
   Production checklist, 159
   Costs estimating, B-53

Provocative Innovations, 180
   Process, B-12
   Rapid e-Learning
     Calculator, 20, 34
     Cost comparison, 21
     Decision making, 163
     Innovations, 14
     Investment 21
Blended Online and Classroom Workshop

Time, speed, quality, 35
Rapid Learning, 8, 14, 25, 173, 193, 200

Real-life, B-23
Relationship, B-25

References, 62, 76, 77, 86, 89, 122, 154, 189, 190, B-12
Reusable
Content, aesthetics, 145
Dimensions of, 143
Rapid software reuse, 142
Software, 21
Tools, 21

Review questions, B-39
Pages, B-39

Rote Learning, B-42

RSS, 3, 4,
Search, 3, B-53
Federated Search, 3, 5
Searchable, 9
Basic e-LA, 61
Virtual classroom, 108
Reference, 114
Knowledge Management, 120
Facility, 171, 172
Dynamic ADDIE, 174

Self-discovery, B-53

Sivasailam Thiagarajan
Instructional design, 44
Skills Inventory, B-53

Slideshows

Kinda cool, 32

Simulation
Discovery, scenario-based, 55
Methods, B-53

Snippets, 6, 125, 175, 177, B-6

SME
Basic Architecture, 70
Benefits to SMEs, 72
Celebrity, pedestal, 72
Discovery process, interview guide, C-3
Educate SME, 72
Fault SMEs, 20
Guide for interviewing 80, Appendix C
Interview questions, 80
Successfully working with, 8
Source of stories, B-26

Software
Project management decisions, 140
Checklist for software decision, 95
Coding, 147
Configuration, 141
CRM, 189
Design, 57
Purchasing, 94
Religions, 96
Reusability, 133
Selection, Rapid, 138
Steroids, 20
Training, B-25
Software behavior, B-52

Social networking, 3, 6, 171, 177, 197, B-53
Speed
Increasing speed 300%, 183
Falling in love, 194
Stories, B-24
  Ways to get stories, B-26
  How to collect stories, B-26

Storyboarding
  Worksheet, B-49

Talking heads
  Default, 57

Tasks, B-12

Technical training, B-25, B-42

Templates, B-51
  Models, B-51

Trainers
  Replacing role, 199

Training outcomes
  TrainingPayback, 195

Video
  Difficult to apply, 31

Virtual Classroom,
  Celebrity, 108
  Criteria, 108
  Right reasons, 108
  Virtual classroom and e-LA, 107

Virtual Trainer
  Interwise, 32
  WebEx, 32

Web 2.0, 3, 6, 171, 193