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# The E-Learning Readiness Survey

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## *20 Key Strategic Questions You and Your Organization Must Answer About the Sustainability of Your E-Learning Efforts*

**E**-Learning presents great opportunities and great challenges. How ready are you? Answer these 20 key questions about building a durable e-learning strategy. Then, determine for yourself how ready you, your organization and your company are to bring learning into the digital age. There are no hard and fast rules as to where you should be in your e-learning journey; use this survey to help you think about where you are doing well and where you need to concentrate your efforts.

The questions are grouped into seven areas of understanding: (1) your business readiness; (2) the changing nature of learning and e-learning; (3) value of instructional and information design; (4) change management; (5) reinventing the training organization; (6) the e-learning industry; and (7) your personal commitment.

The questions provided in this survey represent some of the most important strategic issues organizations face when transitioning to e-learning. Certainly there are additional questions and issues that deserve attention; feel free to add your own, organization-specific items.

### **Directions**

Here's how to complete the survey:

- Respond to each question along the 6-point scale (0 to 5) provided. The scale is provided at the top of each page.
- There are three interpretive statements for each question that will assist you in selecting the right value to choose.
- Circle the number that best represents your situation or viewpoint. Be honest and realistic in your assessment.
- Although most questions ask you to respond for "your organization," e.g., your training organization, you can substitute any other organization in your firm, or respond from the perspective of the company as a whole. You can even respond from your own perspective; just change "your organization" to "you" (question 20 is specifically addressed to *you* already).

At the end of the survey, you'll find information on how to interpret your responses.

**Rating Scale**

- 0 = No evidence of any positive initiative or result in this area.
- 1 = Little evidence, but there are potential improvement opportunities.
- 2 = Initiatives underway but progress is fleeting.
- 3 = Initiatives underway with some sustainable success probable down the road.
- 4 = Reasonable success achieved; now the challenge is to keep it going in the right direction.
- 5 = Approaching sustainability – perhaps even a best practice.

**Area 1: Your Business Readiness**

Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
1. <b>How well is your company using (Internet and intranet) technology to run its business?</b>	Few, if any of our core business processes are web-enabled.		One or more core business functions are web-based, but most internal work and communication is done offline.		Most core business functions are web-enabled, and most internal work and communication, even by senior management, is online.	
Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
2. <b>How prepared (skills, knowledge, motivation) is your workforce to compete and win in the high-tech, new economy?</b>	Most of the workforce is new to the new economy. Many are not computer literate. We have a lot of work to do.		Our workforce is becoming more high-tech all the time. However, there are still significant pockets of people who are not prepared.		Our workforce is quite well prepared to succeed in the new economy. I would consider us technologically advanced.	

**Area 2: The Changing Nature of Learning and E-Learning**

Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
3. <b>How does your organization define “e-learning?”</b>	We tend to define it mostly in terms of traditional CBT; new ideas about e-learning are hard to sell.		E-Learning is new to us so there is an opportunity and an openness to broadly define e-learning; we’re working on it.		We have a broad-based definition of e-learning that includes alternatives such as knowledge management, performance support and other web-enabled distance learning approaches.	
Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
4. <b>How will your organization overcome any bad prior experiences you and others have had with technology-based learning?</b>	We have a lot of convincing to do, there’s a lot of bad feeling regarding prior experiences; we tend to be blamed for past disappointments. Some people are using past experiences as reason for not getting into e-learning.		We haven’t done much in technology-base learning so there’s very little prior experience; there doesn’t appear to be any feelings one way or the other.		We understand that this is a marathon, not a sprint. Our clients and stakeholders look at prior bad experiences as lessons learned and we try to improve over time.	
Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
5. <b>How much access do people have to the web (anyone, any time, anywhere)?</b>	Access to the web is a problem; we are still building out our infrastructure.		We are working with I.T., the CIO and business leaders to assure that people can access the web for learning as well as key business applications.		We have already attained almost universal access in office, field, home environments.	

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Circle one →	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. <b><i>Do you differentiate between instructional needs (training) and informational needs (knowledge management), and do you make the right decisions about when to use each?</i></b>	We don't think of informational needs as within our responsibility; we have a focus on instruction only.		We are beginning to become involved in the delivery of information as a form of learning; it's difficult, but we are making some progress in selling this concept.		We are actively involved in both instructional and informational programs; we are constantly evaluating learning needs to determine which is most appropriate for a given situation.	

**Area 3: The Value of Instruction and Information**

Circle one →	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. <b><i>What is the level of your organization's expertise in instructional and information design?</i></b>	Pretty weak. We have some people who have basic skills but these skills are neither widespread enough nor deep enough to make a fundamental impact.		Growing. We are aware of the increasing importance of these professional skills and we're spending the time and money to significantly upgrade our skills through hiring and/or retraining.		Strong. We have established a strong competency in these areas and are committed to maintaining state-of-the-art expertise in these fields.	
8. <b><i>Is your organization ready to move beyond a predominant reliance on classroom training to a more balanced approach with e-learning?</i></b>	We're struggling with this. In most cases, classroom learning is the default delivery approach. We still oversell e-learning to people who are predominately classroom focused.		We have demonstrated the viability of a combined e-learning and classroom strategy, but it's still a tough sell.		We have implemented a balanced approach between e-learning and classroom learning – our value is making the right decision.	

**Area 4: The Role of Change Management in Building a Durable E-Learning Strategy**

Circle one →	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. <b><i>Does senior management support e-learning?</i></b>	We don't have much access to or support from senior management regarding e-learning. They don't appear to be interested.		We have access, but maintaining their interest and gaining long-term support for this new approach to learning is difficult.		We have access and growing management commitment; we work on it every day.	
10. <b><i>Does your organization have a change management plan for introducing e-learning in your company?</i></b>	We have no change management plan; unfortunately, we tend to move unsystematically from event to event.		We are developing a change management plan, but we're not sure if it will work or if it's complete.		Change management is an integral part of our deployment strategy.	

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Circle one →	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. <b><i>Can your organization demonstrate the business benefits of e-learning?</i></b>	Not really; we are way behind in demonstrating business benefits. We tend to hype the technology and multimedia elements rather than performance benefits. Our measurements are mostly "customer satisfaction" related.		We are working to demonstrate business benefits of e-learning, and we've made some progress in cost, quality, service and speed metrics. But there is a long way to go.		We have been successful in demonstrating business benefits of e-learning and are moving to scale up our capability in this area.	

**Area 5: How Training Organizations Must Reinvent Themselves to Support E-Learning**

Circle one →	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. <b><i>Does your organization have a plan to help the training function reinvent itself for the digital age?</i></b>	We don't really have a plan to change the training organization, although we know we need one.		We are building e-learning components within our organization, but haven't given much thought yet to helping our people change.		We are implementing both e-learning and change management strategies to help our people adapt to the changes that are coming.	
13. <b><i>Is your training organization's economic model predominately dependent on selling seats in the classroom?</i></b>	Pretty much; our budget is derived from tuition. Without tuition, we'd be out of business.		We know we need to abandon a model that focuses exclusively on selling seats in the classroom, but we haven't done much about it.		No, we are moving to an investment model that involves our stakeholders in decisions about how we spend our money and were it comes from.	
14. <b><i>What is the climate in your organization to learning in alternative locations, especially the work site?</i></b>	There is a great deal of resistance to learning at the work site. Many people do not view learning as important as work, or don't see how they're related.		There is an understanding that work and learning go hand-in-hand, and that learning can take place anywhere. However, people still need support to find time to learn, free of interruptions.		We are moving quickly to a culture that accepts e-learning at the work site and we're working with employees and managers to create the right environment for learning to take place.	
15. <b><i>Is your organization willing to allow e-learning to thrive, perhaps at the expense of some of the more traditional parts of the training organization?</i></b>	We're willing to implement e-learning, but if it cuts too far into our classroom business, we will have to re-evaluate – our classroom business is essential to our survival.		We're willing to implement e-learning only in areas that do not conflict with our classroom business.		We're well aware that e-learning will reduce our classroom business, and we're prepared to re-allocate our resources accordingly.	
16. <b><i>How prepared is your organization to invest in, and incubate e-learning for several years in order to get it firmly established?</i></b>	This will be a very difficult sell, as our firm's budgeting process is on an annualized basis. If we don't spend it in the year, we lose it.		We are working to set up a process that will fund e-learning on a multi-year basis, but we still have to convince senior management.		We have successfully restructured our budgeting process, with senior management support, to allow long-term funding of e-learning.	

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**Area 6: The E-Learning Industry**

Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>17. How prepared is your organization to deal with a large and increasingly complex e-learning marketplace?</b>	We've been primarily internally focused; we really don't know much about what's going on in the industry.		We've been purchasing products and services from the e-learning industry for years, but mostly from our traditional vendors. We really need to update our industry knowledge.		We are devoting more time and resources to getting the most out of the increasingly sophisticated e-learning industry.	
Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>18. Does your organization have a good handle on what it is buying in the e-learning marketplace – can it differentiate quality products and weed out redundancies?</b>	Purchasing is haphazard and uncoordinated. We have no strategy for evaluating quality and avoiding redundancy. It's extremely difficult to even know who is buying what.		Everyone involved recognizes the need for better vendor management and more coordinated purchasing. We're just not there yet.		We have implemented an agreed upon approach to vendor relationships and purchasing, and we are achieving increased cost savings and experiencing less redundancy	
Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>19. Is your organization prepared to outsource some of its functions and manage them externally so that it can concentrate its resources on more valuable areas?</b>	We're not prepared to significantly outsource any of our major functions.		We are experimenting with outsourcing some of our organization's functions so that we can focus on more valuable areas.		We have included outsourcing as a key component of our strategic plan – how we will manage the organization in the future.	

**Area 7: Your Personal Commitment**

Circle one →	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>20. How committed are you, personally, to e-learning? Are you ready?</b>	I really haven't paid much attention. Besides, I'm not totally convinced that this is the right way to go for our organization.		I believe this is the right way to go, but I don't have enough capability to move forward towards implementing an e-learning strategy.		I am totally committed to e-learning and have taken the time to educate myself with the major issues. I am ready to implement durable e-learning strategy.	

## How did you respond? Are you ready?

Each item in this survey is as important as any other, so a total of your responses is less meaningful than your own analysis of each individual item. Here are some things to think about when you review your responses:

- Any item with a response of *0-1* could be a *show-stopper*. The low rating may indicate resistance to change, and/or a lack of readiness/capability on the part of people, infrastructure or the organization as a whole. Here is where you should concentrate your change management efforts to move the rating further to the right; your e-learning strategy won't be successful until you do.
- Any item with a response of *2 or 3* indicates that *progress is being made*, but more effort would be worthwhile to avoid any disruption of your momentum or other unforeseen potholes. These are areas where opportunities for improvement may be easiest.
- Any item with a response of *4 or 5* indicates *considerable progress*. These are your success stories. Use them to help bring up the other areas of your strategy. For example, if you have strong senior management support, but you've sensed too much focus on technology alone, you might want to develop some communications from supportive managers that will help people understand the broader issues beyond the technology.

The results of this survey can be a catalyst for important discussions within your organization on changes that are necessary to launch and maintain successful e-learning initiative. Use it to surface important issues and challenges, and to consider innovative solutions.

In the end, e-learning readiness is an issue not only for your organization, but for you as well (as reflected in question 20). Your own personal commitment will be a key determining factor in the success and sustainability of your e-learning strategy.