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Blended versus hybrid learning

What is the difference, if any, between blended and hybrid learning?

Blended learning is often identified with hybrid learning. In reality, these are two approaches to training that move on two different levels. While blended learning plays on the physical/virtual track, hybrid or hybrid learning is about the type of learning you want to offer. Here are the main differences and how to use the two approaches in online learning.

The characteristics of blended learning

We speak of **blended learning** when a training course takes place in blended mode, partly in the classroom and partly online. The reasons for adopting a blended approach depend on the type of course to be offered and the need for interaction between the learners and between them and the trainer. There are endless combinations that determine different **models of blended learning**. Among them we can mention:

- **Flipped classroom**, literally inverted classroom where students first acquire the knowledge they need through a learning platform or **LMS**, learning management system, and then confront the trainer on the same topics in the classroom. The flipped classroom can be adopted both in corporate and school training and aims to promote student involvement and autonomy.
- **Rotation models**: there are a number of them and they are applied mainly in the school environment and provide students with the opportunity to take turns in classroom training and online training, obtaining a path that is more suited to their individual needs.

In the company context, blended training is a way of putting **social learning** into practice: providing opportunities for students to meet each other and strengthening the content learned in asynchronous mode by comparing it with colleagues. Corporate blended learning is particularly suitable for complex and technical courses that provide a broad knowledge base to be developed independently, alternating moments of reinforcement and motivational drive in presence.

What is hybrid learning

Hybrid learning is an approach to training that combines formal, informal and **experience-based learning**. At the core of hybrid learning is the learning experience that looks at the individual needs of the learner who not only has to learn notions but also put them into practice.

The aim of the training is not only to achieve a diploma, an official recognition as in formal learning, but also to learn from more experienced colleagues (**informal learning**) and to apply what has been learned in the performance of one's work activities or to learn in a controlled environment before applying the new behaviours to reality.

The blended approach to online training fits fully into the concept of **lifelong learning** because it stimulates trainees to learn, review what they have learnt perhaps through observation and apply directly when needed.

Mixed and hybrid learning: what is the boundary?

There is a grey area between blended and hybrid learning and this is why they are often united, if not taken as interchangeable. The common feature is the concept that in order to learn you do not need to **be physically present in the classroom**, but that you can also learn online and at a distance, in general. While blended learning is limited to the use of both presence and distance learning, hybrid learning goes beyond the real-virtual question and also embraces the kind of learning that can be achieved and that is not only formal, but also linked to exchanges and experiences that are made online, offline, at a distance, in the classroom, in the workplace and elsewhere.

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