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Online and in-person learning: pros and cons

Is online or face-to-face training better? There is no right answer. Knowing the pros and cons of both approaches can be helpful in choosing the best method each time.

Over the past two years, the race to digital, fueled by the social distancing brought on by COVID-19, has accelerated the shift from physical to digital. The use of distance learning, and e-Learning more generally, has been one of the most obvious transformations. Online training, of course, has supporters and detractors.

While in some cases, online learning can never completely replace in-person learning, especially when there is a need for practice (for example, in the case of a nurse), in general, a debate has opened up about the advantages and disadvantages of online and traditional training. Let's take a look at the main pros and cons of the two forms of learning:

1. Accessibility and flexibility of training.

In this case, e-Learning has an advantage as it allows trainees to access the course whenever and wherever they want and progress at a more personal pace. On the contrary, face-to-face training needs more planning not only for those who organize it, but also for those who participate in it who, often, for work or personal issues have difficulty managing their schedule and travel to the course location.

2. Practical and interactive training

Despite the possibilities offered by virtual reality or scenario-based learning, online training cannot replace classroom learning, which requires the need to be physically in a location. In fact, to develop certain skills, virtual learning is not enough. At the same time, traditional learning allows for deeper relationships with other trainees and tutors, although online training tries to bridge the "coldness" of virtual interactions through forums, video calls, and social networks.

3. Costs

From the trainees' point of view, online training allows them to reduce some of the costs of the course, from transportation, to accommodation, to books. Similarly for organizers, face-to-face courses require an infrastructure and additional expenses that are not necessary in online training. In addition, at no extra cost, each student can return to review parts of the course and material as often as they wish, without the risk of **information overload** caused by face-to-face classroom lectures.

4. Motivation

Having the trainees a few feet away allows you to immediately pick up on their reactions, both positive and negative. If in traditional training keeping students' attention is a real challenge, in online training, however, the difficulties are doubled because of the lack of direct interaction (or reduced interaction in the case of synchronous lessons). For this reason, in e-Learning, the issue of **learner engagement** is crucial.

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