

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT)

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) is a fast-growing segment of workplace education. Sometimes viewed as the poor relation of traditional Instructor-Led Training (ILT), initial attempts at creating solid instructional experiences in this medium have been met with mixed results. A high incidence of ineffective VILT characterized by lengthy presentations with too many static slides, too few interactions and stilted facilitation, has led many organizations to conclude that VILT is less than optimal for learning.

At PMG Learning Solutions, we know it doesn't have to be that way. We believe that well-executed VILT offers benefits and overcomes the limitations of traditional learning approaches as illustrated in this table.

	Traditional ILT	Traditional eLearning	Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT)
Development Time	Requires planning and logistics for each classroom session	Requires longer to develop content; Saves time and expense of travel; Little planning or logistics after initial implementation on an LMS	Requires some planning but fewer logistics; Saves time and expense of travel
Revision and Maintenance	Can be updated live by facilitator in some cases	Slower and more costly to update content	Can be updated live via technology in some cases
Convenience	Facilitator convenience	Learner convenience	Facilitator and learner convenience
Guest/ Expert Participation	Difficult to include experts and guest speakers to speak live due to scheduling and other logistics	Can include experts and guest speakers by prerecorded video	Experts and guests can attend live from the location of their choice (very time efficient for them)
Connectivity	Strengthens connections between learners and facilitator	Learners can feel disconnected from the information being communicated	Strengthens connections between learners and facilitator
Feedback	Facilitator is available to answer questions directly during the session	Very limited ability to answer questions directly in this environment (other than canned FAQs)	Facilitator can be available to answer questions before, during, and after virtual sessions in real time
Reuse as Refresher/ Newcomers	It is not possible to easily reuse/ replay live sessions for those who were unable to attend or who require a refresher of the information	Easily reused for any reason	Can be recorded for reuse as a refresher, to accommodate those who missed the session, etc.
Collaboration	Encourages collaboration with proper facilitation	Doesn't generally support collaboration	Encourages collaboration with proper facilitation

Obvious VILT benefits include:

- Learning from a real, live person beyond office walls (and, if needed, outside business hours).
- Erases geographic barriers; it can also take learning across time in a way that has not been previously possible.
- Extends learning across time in that it allows the facilitator to interact with learners frequently and simultaneously.

In a live classroom setting, for example, facilitator and learners communicate one-on-one, while others merely observe. The facilitator poses a question and selects one person to respond verbally. Everyone else is left to listen. In the VILT classroom, the facilitator poses a question and asks everyone to type their answer into chat, then the facilitator debriefs. Every learner is actively engaged at the same time. Further, the experienced virtual facilitator can gauge individual participation and understanding of the material by their typed responses.



VILT provides opportunities for a variety of learner interactions beyond simple polls and chats that are frequently tossed into virtual learning sessions as “interaction.” Within one session learners can:

- Work offline by themselves (self-paced)
- Work together in recurring rooms or break outs
- Complete independent research on the web then debrief as a group
- Review recorded sessions asynchronously
- Answer chat questions
- Ask each others' opinions
- Share new points of view
- Watch a video
- Take a quiz
- Share a file
- Brainstorm ideas and then prioritize them
- Tweet a reaction

These types of connections mirror the real life and social connections that most learners use today and lend themselves to a rich blended learning experience.

We recognize the importance of supporting continuous learner recall and performance. VILT, done well, builds active participation that results in authentic and sustained learning. Rather than seeing training as a stand-alone event, PMG Learning supports learning as a process that can be supported by VILT to improve performance on the job.

VILT lends itself well to spaced learning and subscription learning, where learning points are introduced in shorter sessions and revisited over time. In a face-to-face class, logistics often require information to be shared during one, longer session or event. For example, think about the last time you traveled to a two-day workshop. Did you learn the content from the afternoon of the second day as well as what was presented early in the day on the first day? Most likely not. With VILT it is easier and cost effective to meet more frequently for shorter durations, which is great for learning. For instance, in the virtual environment you might meet for an initial learning session and then on a weekly basis (for 20 minutes) reconvene for Q&A and to share experiences with the content. Used in this manner, VILT supports recall, which is the key to training that “sticks.”

As training shifts from the classroom to the individual's cubicle (or smartphone device), PMG Learning's virtual learning strategies help learners to better recall the information they need at the time they need it. Our strategies are based on variety of type and pace of activities and the proven premise that frequent, multiple interactions over time leads to better learning. PMG Learning's VILT solutions deliver retrieval practice in contextually aligned, realistic simulations and scenarios whenever possible. In this way, we know that our solutions lead to behavior change.

Used alone, or as part of a blended learning solution, VILT translates training that resonates with learners into learning retention that improves job performance and leads to measureable business results.