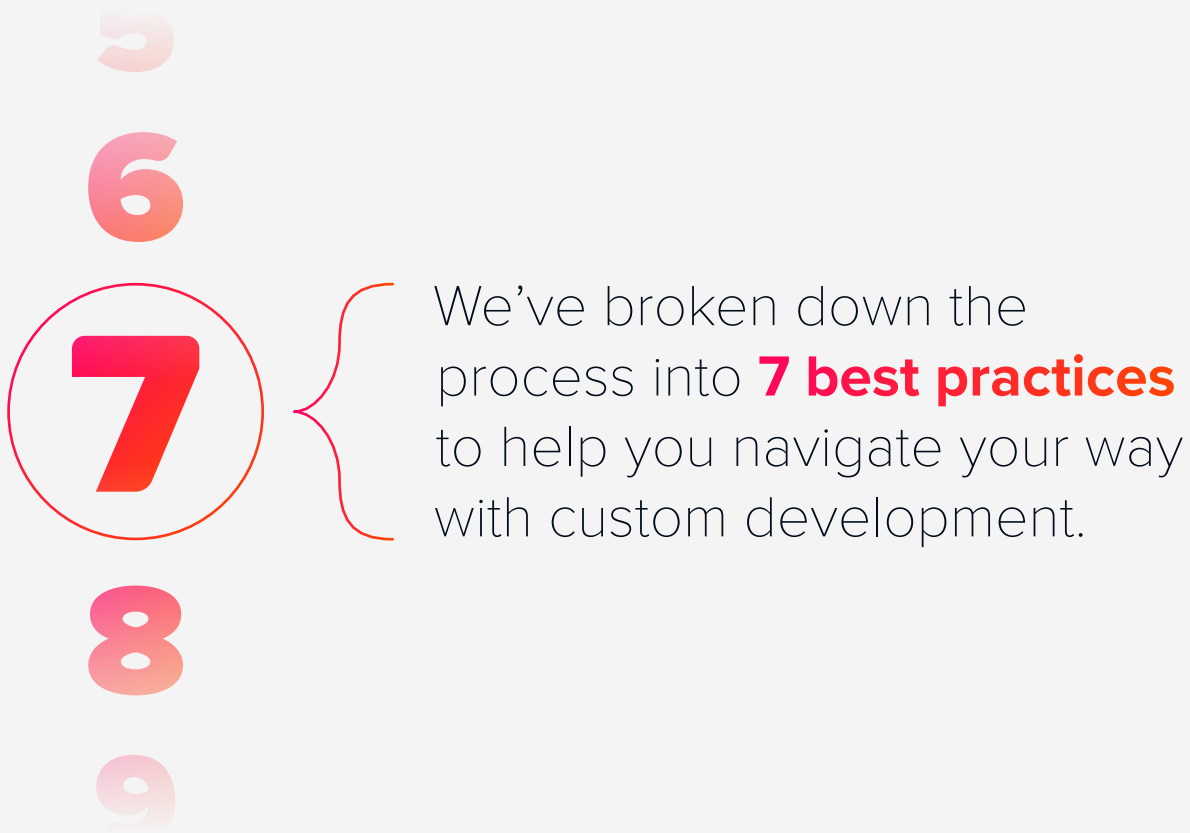# ELB LEARNING

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7 BEST PRACTICES

to Ensure Success When Outsourcing Custom Course Development

Building a learning program is a complex puzzle.

The cornerstones of agile instructional design, learning solutions, learning strategy, and modern technologies join forces to engage learners and provide a learning experience. Both transforming behavior through training and creating a positive learning culture are achieved when all these pieces fall into place.

Do you lack technical skills to create the perfect courses for your learners? Have you run out of bandwidth? Or are you a compact team? Then custom development may be the path for you. The big question? How can you ensure success with your "puzzle"—custom learning content?

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We've broken down the process into **7 best practices** to help you navigate your way with custom development.

1 Uncover Your Learning Objectives, Goals, & Success Criteria

It all starts with the big picture—the business goals to meet, the objectives to achieve, and establishing a robust learning design for the cause. A **Needs Analysis** is a fundamental prerequisite to designing any learning program and must involve the following steps:

a. Identify Business Needs

Critical for this step is asking the right people the right questions. Is the C-suite looking to address skill gaps or provide performance support solutions? Improve sales and revenue while building relationships with customers? What does the organization aspire to achieve? The objective of this exercise stands as a cornerstone during the design stage and helps assess and evaluate the success of the training program. Specifically, this is a benchmark for determining to what extent the desired learning outcomes have been achieved.

b. Understand the Gap

Once the business needs and objectives are identified, understand the gap between the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the objective and the general knowledge and skill levels of the workforce. The gaps identified are the areas to be addressed through effective training and development. For example, the manufacturing industry has identified gaps in critical thinking, muscle memory and digital skills among the workforce, with the advancement of technologies and automation.

c. Define Decisive Training Goals

With the first two steps in order, make key decisions at this stage that will assist in achieving the goals. Construct a design strategy to formulate the flow of the course, and the standardization of the training program. Do you want to collaborate with SMEs for their technical prowess and create accurate and sound learning content? Decide on the extent of their collaboration.

For instance, for a custom solution project aimed at improving customer relationships, ELB Learning would partner with distinguished SMEs, i.e. Bronze to Gold medal holders of sales championship programs, who bring their unique expertise, analytical insights, and add greater value to the custom solution.

Additionally, evaluate key aspects such as time frame and frequency of training, and training methodology - traditional classroom training, eLearning, or a blend of both. And do you have a training budget in place?

d. Factor Learner Needs & Competencies

Understand your demographic by identifying what motivates your learners and recognizing their readiness to undergo training. Further, assess learners' preferred learning style and techniques, and how they learn and retain best. Psychological elements and socio-cultural aspects too can have a significant impact on the success of the training program. For example, if your learners are millennials, they may be comfortable with the concept of pinning content to a board, similar to Pinterest.

Most recently, ELB Learning provided custom training solutions to young leaders of an international fraternity. Considering the demographic, ELB deployed **custom illustrations** to replicate video game avatars in its value-based training modules aimed at understanding realistic scenarios, policies and forging healthy relationships in the fraternity. This solution paved the way to higher pledge retention rates and increased involvement among members while providing a "lit" experience.

e. Plan for Assessments to Measure Success

A pre-assessment and post-assessment strategy will help determine the extent of success with learning outcomes and learning objectives. This will serve as an indication of knowledge accumulated after instruction. Use this data to further invest in effective learning solutions for the workforce.

At ELB Learning, we drive the learning design stage towards strategic excellence. Armed with a thorough needs analysis, the custom solutions architect will lay out the proposed course so that the client can witness the overall experience. This is achieved through a systematic process of **visual storyboarding and scripting** to solve your training challenges. It is a snapshot that details the optimal solution with the course content, recommended learning strategies, instructional concepts, and activities; meticulously connected to the learning outcomes. We constantly engage and review with our clients before transitioning to the phase of course development.

2 Align with a Partner Who Can Help Realize Your Goals

The right custom vendor will be a gateway to a pool of talent and help you achieve your organization's goals. Almost like an extension of your own team, the custom vendor holds the trump card to make or break your L&D goals.

Custom content vendors often have access to multiple subject matter experts to cater to the learning needs of diverse industries, and many vendors have staff with advanced degrees in their fields. An added bonus would be if training development staff have obtained the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) certifications. Choosing such a custom vendor **delivers remarkable talent** and creativity from instructional designers, game designers, content authors, video specialists, animation experts, and more to create and develop formidable eLearning for your organization.

Take cognizance of their body of work and the industry awards and recognitions they've earned.

While being on time and on budget is important, do take time to review their work ethics, customer service and flexibility to meet your needs. Whether it's helping frame your learning strategy, building an entire curriculum, or converting existing training, the vendor must be able to scale beyond your in-house capabilities.

3 Architect the Right Learning Solutions for Your Unique Needs

One of the predominant reasons for businesses to choose custom solutions is because of content value and engagement. The difference is as evident as night and day!

Custom partners have the niche and expertise to transform learning into an exciting and engaging experience, by using modern tools, strategies, and technologies that work best for your audience. Your custom vendor must be able to explore opportunities that feed the learner who is conditioned to modern digital environments and be able to create visually explosive and immersive eLearning.

Invest in deploying **video coaching**, asynchronous video practice, or provide an alternative learning perspective through a gamified or game-based learning solution. **Gaming**, interactive elements, and the visual imagery available today are unparalleled and can be expertly weaved into the program, scoring high on learners' attention and knowledge retention.

How about using immersive learning tools? **Virtual reality** and augmented reality solutions have made a stellar impact on learners. From onboarding, equipment training, safety training, and beyond, mixed reality solutions today push boundaries to make it scalable on epic levels. The sweet learning analytics that organizations can leverage make for a fitting home run.

Vendors should also actively engage in finding avenues to deploy the L&D golden goose—**microlearning**. Bite-sized learning and mobile learning are poised to tackle the learning challenges of today. Effectively strike down short attention spans and competing demands with experiential learning that meets the moment of need. Microlearning helps in creating viral learning moments in the flow of work.

Whether learners are in a hybrid or remote workplace, great training content is the steppingstone to **creating an engaged learning culture** in the organization. Thoroughly understand the demographic and training needs before choosing the ideal learning solution.

4 Choose the Right Learning Technology that Enables Architecture

Undoubtedly, investing in content is key. However, you must walk the entire mile to evaluate delivery platforms for your custom content.

If there is a pre-existing LMS or LXP in your organization, understand its capabilities; but, most importantly, get acquainted with its limitations before you proceed with custom content development. Did your vendor come up with sharp gamified assessments in the product training module, only to discover that your LMS does not support modern technologies? There is no room for shades of gray!

If eLearning is the preferred strategy, investing in a modern, user-friendly platform like **the Rockstar Learning Platform** is the way to go for its experiential learning capabilities—including strong video functionality (key for microlearning) and flexibility in integrating with third-party technologies.

However, if a blended learning approach works in your favor, **CourseMill® LMS** has proven capabilities that include strong

support of accessible content combined with remarkable reporting and deep analytics. Such a platform can leverage success from custom content using it in both classroom sessions and for self-paced learning.

Are your training modules using VR technology providing an immersive and safer learning experience to your employees? CenarioVR is an all-encompassing web or native app, and it publishes content in SCORM formats (for certification tracking), and can even be viewed on a headset within your LMS.

Arrive at a decision not because the technology is cool and is on the trending list. Find a platform that works best to support your training goals and business objectives.

5 Unleash a Learner-centered Design

Here is your mic-drop moment! User interface (UI) and user experience (UX) can propel your custom solutions to star status.

Your custom vendor's instructional designers must be adept at bringing content and knowledge to life with the learner in mind. The sweet spot of custom course development is when design aesthetics, relevance and utility help bring new knowledge and skills seamlessly into the learner's reality. Keep cognitive overload at bay and deliver an effective and appealing learning experience.

Recently, ELB Learning partnered with a global enterprise to address specific learning needs of the workforce. While the client wanted to deploy a progressive eLearning strategy, the custom solutions team ascertained that the target audience did not have desk jobs. Expecting employees to acquire new skills through eLearning designed for desktop computers is futile. Even worse would be expecting learners to access learning on their mobile devices through an interface not designed for mobile learning.

Team ELB Learning plowed ahead to create a **modern mobile learning experience** delivered to the learners' fingertips. The course structure, interaction, navigation, and design elements provided a conducive mobile learning experience that ramped up accessibility, performance, and course completion.

Learning that is learner-centric ensures superior learning outcomes. The **UI and UX** are promising aspects that can provide a fast track to achieving training goals.

Do you want to hear more UI/UX success stories from our custom development team? **Contact us.**

6 Encourage Continuous Learning

There is more to custom solutions than the delivery of knowledge and skills. It has the potential to provide a comprehensive learning solution for the organization—one that engages learners, drives behavior change, and fosters a culture of learning at the workplace.

Today, learning solution providers are armed with an array of products to provide the learner with a progressive learning experience over time. The chosen partner has the expertise to understand your unique needs and the tools to back them.

An instructor-led program can be followed up with asynchronous video coaching that can provide one-on-one feedback and mentorship. How about deploying arcade games to reinforce knowledge? Microlearning tools and video-based practice provide additional interactions and leverage learning retention.

Realize the merits of spaced learning through a unique blend of products and tools that delivers a continuous learning experience.

# 7 Evaluate the Learning Experience

It all boils down to data and how we use it! The deployed custom solution must enable measurement throughout the learning experience, from the perspective of both L&D admin and user. The metrics that you uncover should mirror your learning objectives and goals as detailed in Step 1.

If custom solutions are delivered through an existing LMS/LXP, does it provide insights and **live analytics** on its dashboard? Is the LMS built to capture xAPI—a specification that can foster learning among learners?

Did you know that **The Training Arcade®'s learning games** provide rich data that unveils patterns of engagement and reveals knowledge gaps? Immediate feedback keeps learners on track, and goal setting motivates them to improve their scores and collect rewards. Similarly, when using **Rehearsal (a video role-play training platform)** as a stand-alone application or integrated

with your in-house LMS/LXP, it provides real-time feedback from mentors, SMEs, and even artificial intelligence (AI) based on keyword recognition and their context (i.e., Natural Language Processing/NLP).

Such analytics and extended learning strategies will help you learn more about your employees and how they interact. It also paves the way to adjust your training strategy, leverage skills more effectively, and optimize your return on investment. The right custom partner can help you ensure you're tracking the metrics your organization cares about.
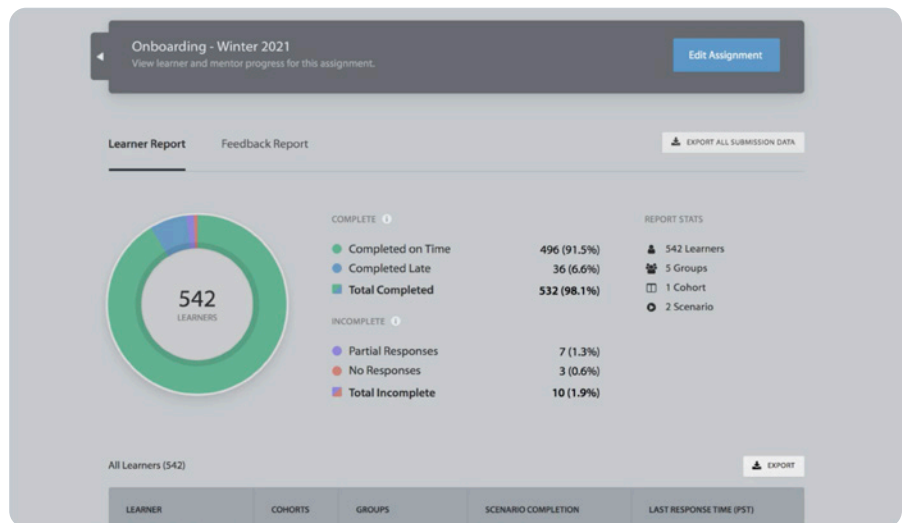
Have questions about custom development?
Contact us for a free consultation.