Learning through a pandemic

Real L&D stories to shape your content authoring strategy

Introduction

Global audiences have reacted to the pandemic—causing a seismic shift to remote working— with eLearning the go-to way of reaching global audiences. What does this mean for your content authoring strategy going forward? How can you tap into the trends that we're seeing now and use them to inform your eLearning program?

The trends we discuss here are compiled from feedback given by a cross-section of LEO Learning's global L&D customers. LEO is one of our sister companies, a major Gomo user, and an award-winning provider of learning strategy, design, and technology for global businesses.

Since the start of the pandemic, organizations have had to adapt almost everything—from the way they author learning content to how they deliver training. With challenges like learner engagement and employee isolation in mind, L&D departments will likely continue adapting learning programs to a new way of work for the foreseeable future.

Where hands-on learning and face-to-face instruction are often necessary, (like in the defense or automotive industries) there were some challenges that eLearning couldn't solve completely. However, many have successfully transitioned portions of their programs to virtual classrooms or began adapting to engaging programs like video, animation, or virtual reality (VR).

Keep reading for some of the other challenges and trends we noticed from customers across finance, banking, automotive, and beyond. We also look at how these trends might affect your learning design strategy moving forward.

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4 trends that will shape your future content authoring strategies

It's been a rocky 18 months for organizations working remotely. We've pulled together four common themes suggested by our panel of LEO Learning experts and wider research, telling the story of the lasting impact that the pandemic has left on learners.

1. Microlearning

Microlearning is targeted learning—delivered in concise, bite-sized chunks—that focuses on a specific product, feature, or service in easy-to-consume learning modules. And, it happened to play a pivotal role in the quick transition from in-person to virtual learning

How it impacted learners

The pandemic has prompted business leaders to take a long look at processes and how to be more agile. How we've seen this being met in the learning space is through microlearning. With the disrupted work/life/home balance, learners wanted content that was quick and to the point—especially as roles shifted and time bandwidth shrank.

How can it be adapted into your current program?

Microlearning can be upcycled from existing course material and converted into bite-sized training content. This gives learners quick, familiar content that is reinforced by repetition in smaller amounts of time.

You can get started by taking long videos and breaking them up into shorter, focused microlearning videos. If you're working with a lot of written material, find specific sections or topics and create independent, concise blurbs.

For more information about how microlearning boosts engagement.

2. Blended learning

Blended learning is a combination of traditional face-to-face learning and eLearning. During the pandemic, we saw a steep rise in the use of virtual classrooms and blends. Video learning (especially bite-sized formats) saw an uptick in engagement as people adapted to distance learning.

How it impacted learners

The traditional blended learning experience was disrupted due to a lack of face-to-face training opportunities, especially since many global workforces went remote at the beginning of 2020. Virtual classrooms and workshops were adapted into the blend which helped learners feel less isolated. This provided the social element that is traditionally achieved via in-person learning.

How can it be adapted into your current program?

Create different learning scenarios (e.g. virtual, social, microlearning via email, in-person, etc.) in order to accommodate blended learning opportunities. As companies begin going back to offices—and some continue working remotely for some or all of the week—the blend of elements will continue to adapt and evolve to changing scenarios.

Content authoring will be key to working across different learning scenarios as it will need to be tailored for global audiences (and the diverse range of learning requirements). This is a great opportunity to audit and upcycle existing content from large and/or outdated materials.

To learn more about what makes a great blended learning journey.

3. Engagement

Learner engagement is always a focal point for learning leaders—or anyone else involved in corporate training. This became a particular focal point while many people worked from home and learning had to adapt quickly. One of the key topics discussed in learning publications was "how do we keep learners engaged without being in the same room?"[1]

How it impacted learners

Learning design experienced a paradigm shift as engagement became more important than ever. More people embraced social learning, giving learners a chance to stay connected and keep communication open with peers or instructors.

How can it be adapted into your current program?

Your learning program should be as diverse as the learners in your organization. That means you should consider using a mix of microlearning, blended learning, gamification, personalized learning, etc.

An eLearning authoring tool that gives you the flexibility to create interesting, tailored content for an array of learners will help you create engaging content. Another big way to impact learner engagement is with a structured blended learning program—offering both connected and asynchronous learning content.

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[1] Lempert, C. (Aug 2020). '7 Ways to Keep Virtual Training and Remote Meetings Engaging'. Available online.

4. Personalized learner journeys

Personalized learning moves away from a "next-next-next" structure and is an important aspect of a seamless learner journey. Keeping learners engaged during remote work can be difficult but personalization can increase engagement.

How it impacted learners

It was recognized that there was a greater need for enhanced learner engagement to improve the overall learner experience. The ability to provide learners with localized content in multiple languages (and with regional or cultural nuances in mind) ensures that content is accessible for the various learning requirements.

This includes displaying scenarios, imagery, and assessments that are relevant to the individual learner. Pandemic or not, learning programs marched on and organizations were able to deliver a more meaningful and personalized experience.

How can it be adapted into your current program?

Dynamic branching scenarios can be explored by job role or location. If you're a learning designer, take the time to understand individual learner needs and create variables to tailor their experience. You can also set display conditions and build interactive screens so you can craft a learner journey that maximizes engagement and meets individual learner requirements.

Moreover, the authoring tool can be packaged into a multi-language shareable content object (SCO) to include role filtering—ensuring the content will be relevant for all. For example, the details of a financial product in Japan may differ from one in the US. Gomo can capture that information, sending the learner through to the most relevant pieces of content for them.

Need help translating a single course into multiple languages?

LEO

# Read the full interviews with LEO Learning experts

The trends identified above were influenced by independent research, insights, and feedback from our existing clients, as well as a series of interviews with top learning experts at our sister company, LEO Learning.

LEO Learning helps enterprise organizations (L'Oréal Professionnel, Honda, Fidelity International, (to name a few) transform their learning programs by providing innovative learning strategies, content, and design. Keep reading to find relevant information—and, we hope, some inspiration—from peers who create learning programs for international audiences.

Ready to see how Gomo's content authoring tool can help you scale a global eLearning program? [Catch a demo today.](#)
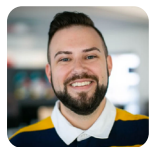
Derek Phillips, PhD, Lead Learning Designer
Industry experience: healthcare, pharma, finance

1 Given the disruption of the pandemic period, how are learners feeling going forward—and how can you accommodate this when creating your learning programs?

I would say learners are feeling restless and cautiously optimistic. We've passed the tipping point of returning to "business as usual", and learners are accepting this fact. However, they are experiencing "Zoom fatigue", and customers/their learners are ready to explore new tools and platforms that are user-friendly, as well as time- and cost-effective.

2 What role did eLearning play when adapting to challenges during the pandemic?

Based on the customers I work alongside, I noticed a divide. Several organizations' learners were accustomed to working from home/interacting remotely but went full-time remote at the onset of the pandemic. Others, however, who work in labs or on production floors, needed to return to their work environment. Regardless of the environment, customers sought to minimize physical contact, and eLearning has played a role in that process.

3 What were the lessons learned and have you adapted your learning programs as a result?

Prior to the pandemic, many organizations saw eLearning as auxiliary or as a "back-up plan" to in-person training opportunities. As a result of going remote, I see us (professionals in this industry) as coaching our more skeptical customers toward a new perspective. Learning programs have naturally evolved and become more robust as our customers begin to imagine new possibilities and allow us to become more creative in our learning solutions.

4 What aspects of face-to-face learning have you missed the most during the pandemic?

Although I have missed in-person rapport-building (on-site with customers), I notice that we have adapted and now have new ways of designing virtual focus groups, kick-offs, and even filming sessions. We have become more intentional, and seeing each other/our customers in our home surroundings adds a sense of "humanity" to our daily interactions.

5 Have you been able to overcome these challenges? If not, what would be your ideal solution?

We incorporate more interactivity into our online sessions, as well as more breaks. Trying out new tools and new methods helps to keep customers' interest, and often transparency is our greatest tool.

6 What are your favorite features in your authoring tool that help to engage your learners?

More and more customers are embracing social learning. Gomo, when leveraged alongside customer Learning Management Systems such as Docebo, can do great things when it comes to connecting learners and keeping conversations going.

7 What are the main challenges you face when creating eLearning for a global workforce?

I would say hesitation to adapt. However, as already mentioned, the pandemic has forced more skeptical customers' hands to embrace eLearning out of necessity. Even in more hands-on industries (automotive, for example), organizations are beginning to see the benefits of eLearning strategies such as AR and VR.

8 How does your authoring tool help you overcome these challenges?

Many of our customers have expressed a desire to create a "one-stop-shop" UX, and Gomo is optimal for this request. Features such as its inherent mobile-friendliness, as well as its Resources and Glossary topics, encourage learners to revisit key learning assets, even on the go or long after they've finished a course.

Raye Pritchett-Page, Learning Consultant

Industry experience: finance

1 Given the disruption of the pandemic period, how are learners feeling going forward—and how can you accommodate this when creating your learning programs?

Learners are overwhelmed with the amount of calls and work they have to do in their working environments. It's been difficult for them to adjust to home working life in most cases. From what I'm hearing, people are feeling isolated. I have recently designed onboarding programs which aim to connect people through activities and tasks so that they build networks in these environments.

When creating virtual face-to-face training, it has been important to make them interactive (Jamboard, Miro, quizzes, etc.) to keep people engaged. Making sure the learning is short and easy to digest has been important too—we need to incorporate screen breaks into our designs.

2 What role did eLearning play when adapting to challenges during the pandemic?

Face-to-face learning had to quickly transition to online training. Most of the programs I have been working on were created for this very reason. The entire workforce moved from office to at-home working environments.

3 What were the lessons learned and have you adapted your learning programs as a result?

eLearning needs to be factored into the learner's working days. It needs to be easy to pick up and digest, and it needs to be interactive and engaging. Activities and games are proving invaluable in this environment to help people feel motivated, inspired, and part of a team.

4 What aspects of face-to-face learning have you missed the most during the pandemic?

I have missed the full-day training events. Going to meet the clients in person, having a dedicated day to work on activities, having lunches, and getting to know the facilitators/participants. The sense of team has been difficult to create in the pandemic.

5 Have you been able to overcome these challenges? If not, what would be your ideal solution?

I'd say so. The programs I have designed have been full of engaging activities for people to play and explore. This has been in the form of mini games and scavenger hunts aiming to get people connected to others.

6 What are your favorite features in your authoring tool that help to engage your learners?

I love how flexible the tool can be. With the know-how, you can push standard functionality to achieve great things. I designed seven mini-games for Visa in Gomo, for example, using standard Gomo functionality (albeit with complex variables), but the output was great. We had 'complete the email', 'beat the bot', 'quick-fire quiz', and much more.

7 What are the main challenges you face when creating eLearning for a global workforce?

Making sure the language and context are set at a level which everyone understands.

8 How does your authoring tool help you overcome these challenges?

The authoring tool can be packaged into a multi-language SCO and it can include role filtering to make sure the content is relevant for all. For example, the details of a financial product in Japan may differ from one in the US, and we can capture that information and filter the learner through to the information which is most relevant to them.

Andrew Joly, Director of Strategic Design

Andrew has worked with customers in the finance industry and companies employing over 5,000 workers.

1 **Given the disruption of the pandemic period, how are learners feeling going forward—and how can you accommodate this when creating your learning programs?**

Disrupted, distanced, and isolated. We can drive social, blended, structured learning programs to support and mentor people through them more.

A positive: many have 'discovered' digital learning over the pandemic period, which has been both good and bad—they are questioning the quality of what they see but also seeing the value in well-created and relevant content.

2 **What role did eLearning play when adapting to challenges during the pandemic?**

People had time and need for it. Unfortunately, honestly, eLearning courses were not at the top of the list of things that needed doing. Going virtual was, alongside social-like non-asynchronous content.

3 **What were the lessons learned and have you adapted your learning programs as a result?**

All face-to-face has gone virtual; yes, massively. But customers are seeing that good blended learning is the answer—you can't just rely on virtual classrooms.

4 **What aspects of face-to-face learning have you missed the most during the pandemic?**

Engagement, networking, and flexibility.

5 **Have you been able to overcome these challenges? If not, what would be your ideal solution?**

Very much so. The ideal solution is a well-designed blended learning journey, built out of a well-structured learning ecosystem that connects learners and gives them what they need in both connected and asynchronous learning content.

6 **What are your favorite features in your authoring tool that help to engage your learners?**

Speed, ease of use, interactivity, and data collection.

7 **What are the main challenges you face when creating eLearning for a global workforce?**

That people don't value it enough.

8 **How does your authoring tool help you overcome these challenges?**

It is quick, easy, and flexible enough to create short, relevant, engaging, up-to-date content packages.

Geoff Bloom, Principal Consultant

Industry experience: banking and finance, government, automotive distribution

1 Given the disruption of the pandemic period, how are learners feeling going forward—and how can you accommodate this when creating your learning programs?

Learners are successfully transitioning to online, virtual classrooms. These are done both in groups and via self-study. Some will inevitably need to return to face-to-face when allowed. To accommodate, L&D can use live, online classrooms, rapidly-created walkthrough videos, and how-to videos.

2 What role did eLearning play when adapting to challenges during the pandemic?

Virtual classrooms were a massive shift for our customers, with a reduction in pre-recorded video. eLearning content itself hasn't changed much during this time, however there has been a move towards smaller modules and personalization. The use of animation and audio learning formats remains about the same. eLearning is still an important component in the mix, especially when addressing the needs of very large audiences and relatively non-volatile content.

3 What were the lessons learned and have you adapted your learning programs as a result?

Virtual classrooms and blends adapted greatly. eLearning saw no real change apart from more emphasis on saving time and a focus on personalization. There has been some demand for rapid content creation in eLearning as well as more use of LMS embedded tools with a gradual shift away from SCOs.

4 What aspects of face-to-face learning have you missed the most during the pandemic?

Everyone has inevitably missed physical hands-on use of equipment but have otherwise adapted well. The social aspects of workshops have also been missed, such as travel, socializing and entertainment, meals out, and team bonding. Customers are desperate to reduce screen time.

5 Have you been able to overcome these challenges? If not, what would be your ideal solution?

Not really. The defense sector has continued to use face-to-face instructors. Most customers have transitioned well to virtual classrooms and Zoom.

6 What are your favorite features in your authoring tool that help to engage your learners?

The variety of question formats, use of variables to enable branching, video, animation, occasionally audio, multi-device, and question response level analytics.

7 What are the main challenges you face when creating eLearning for a global workforce?

Accessibility, multi-language, accounting for cultural differences amongst global audiences, and legislative/hosting challenges (e.g. GDPR) are some of the biggest challenges faced.

8 How does your authoring tool help you overcome these challenges?

Reasonably well regarding translation, accessibility, and creating, delivering and catering for multi-device consumption of eLearning.

Nic Price, Lead Learning Designer
Industry experience: professional and financial services

1 Given the disruption of the pandemic period, how are learners feeling going forward—and how can you accommodate this when creating your learning programs?

Learners are getting used to working in isolation. Many are self-conscious about appearing busy when not physically present. Learning programs with tangible outputs and metrics (e.g. recognizing the time spent) are valued.

2 What role did eLearning play when adapting to challenges during the pandemic?

Most of our customers already have the infrastructure. However, everyone found gaps, e.g, discovering that some parts of the catalog were built in Flash. Particularly problematic when these parts are also those that support remote working!

3 What aspects of face-to-face learning have you missed the most during the pandemic?

Everything that happens beyond the formal objectives. Discussion, problem-solving, sharing, etc.

4 Have you been able to overcome these challenges? If not, what would be your ideal solution?

Chat groups have played a large role in the LEO/LTG[2] solution but we are really at the limits of where chat works—a bigger and more sophisticated type of work social network is needed.

5 What are your favorite features in your authoring tool that help to engage your learners?

Content is king! That said, being able to create nice seamless journeys through content (getting away from the next-next-next) is something we aim for.

6 What are the main challenges you face when creating eLearning for a global workforce?

- Keeping on top of quality
- Managing stakeholder reviews
- Lots of admin, particularly around translation
- Properly meeting accessibility requirements

7 How does your authoring tool help you overcome these challenges?

Gomo is good because of how nice-looking and responsive it is.

Ready to take advantage of this year's biggest content authoring trends? Have a look at what Gomo's solutions can do for your organization's eLearning program.

2 LEO Learning and Gomo, amongst many other businesses, are part of Learning Technologies Group or LTG, a global market leader in workplace learning and talent management.

About Gomo

The Gomo learning suite provides multi-award-winning products that allow you to create, deliver, update, and track beautiful multi-device eLearning. With Gomo Authoring, you can create truly responsive and adaptive HTML5 content that looks perfect on all devices, including desktops, tablets, and smartphones. With Gomo Delivery and Analytics, you can get content into the hands of learners instantly via websites, direct link, the Gomo LMS wrapper, social media, and more—all with full xAPI analytics.

With an ever-growing client base including the BBC, British Airways, BT, Centrica, General Electric, HSBC, L'Oréal, Royal Mail Group, Shell, Sony, Squarespace, TDK, Vodafone, Weetabix, Whatsapp, the World Health Organization and many more, Gomo is quickly becoming the established choice for global organizations seeking collaborative, future-proof and responsive HTML5 multi-device eLearning.

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