

## Intend to Blend?

KnowledgePool's approach to designing effective Blended Learning solutions

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## About KnowledgePool

KnowledgePool's world class learning services transform Learning & Development (L&D). We work with our clients to meet business needs, reduce costs and improve quality.

We are experts in learning. We can bring benefit whether we deliver part of a training project, or manage an organisation's entire L&D programme. Because this is our specialism, we have the skills and dedication to be more efficient and innovate faster than most in-house L&D teams can do themselves.

Unlike many training companies, we have a small permanent team and no training centres. Instead, we partner with best-of-breed suppliers to deliver the best learning solutions for our clients, which deliver business benefit with no loss of control (in fact we expect to give you more control).

Our blend of specialist skills, covering BPO, learning / HR consultancy, supplier management, project management, customer service and leading edge IT integration makes us quite unique in the L&D arena.

We have been around for 40 years and our clients include British Airways, the Home Office, Fujitsu, Lloyds TSB and Orange.

In this paper, we explain our approach to Blended Learning including:

- What we mean by Blended Learning and how it can benefit you, your employees and your business objectives
- A 5 step approach to Blended Learning
- The use of learning objectives, learning objects and topics to identify a successful blend
- The questions you need to answer in terms of learning content, the learners' needs and the organisational requirements
- The various methods of delivery available and how to make the best selection
- How to create a cohesive blend

## Introduction

According to the dictionary definition, 'to blend' means 'to mix', as in mixing a number of ingredients together to make a cake. In the world of learning, a blended solution refers to a mix of different types of training, such as e-learning, workshops, workbooks and floorwalking, used together to provide an overall solution to a learning need.

However, it is not quite that simple. Anyone can take a number of random ingredients, mix them in any order and bake for an unspecified length of time, but they won't necessarily end up with something that resembles a cake or, indeed, that is edible. It will only be successful if the correct mix of ingredients is identified, put together in the correct order and baked for the right length of time. In the same way, just mixing together a variety of different training methods won't necessarily result in meeting the learning objectives unless the right mix of learning is identified and delivered in the right order at the right time.

The mix may be quite simple, where the trainee follows a programme of training, in a specified order. Alternatively, it may provide options to complete different elements of training in parallel or, indeed, allow the user to choose the order of training depending on their current knowledge and skills. As well as identifying the different elements, it is the job of the successful designer to identify whether the blend should be serial or parallel and what level of trainee choice is allowed.

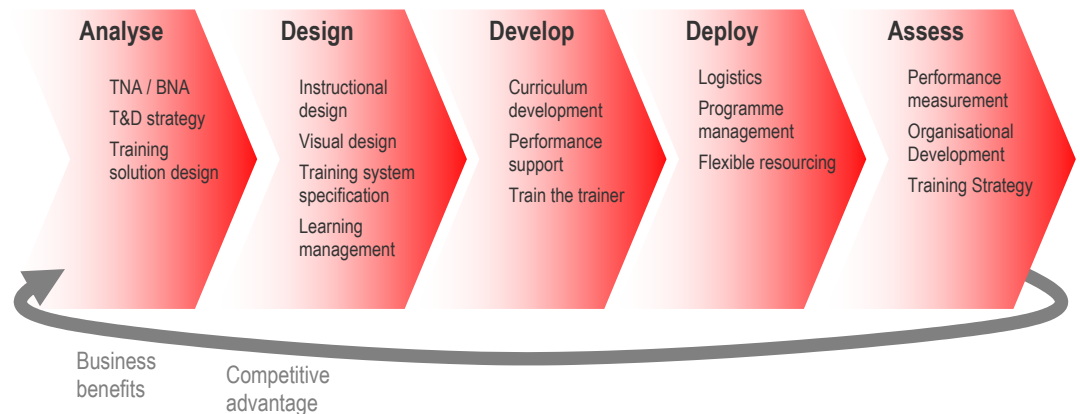
This paper explores KnowledgePool's approach to designing effective blended learning solutions and how to identify the right mix for any given learning need. However, before continuing, it is worth considering the advantages and disadvantages of following the blended learning approach.

The many advantages to using a blended learning approach encompass:

- Opportunities to vary the learning experience to suit both the content and a variety of individual learning styles
- The ability to make best use of trainers, coaches and facilitators to add value rather than just impart factual information
- Allowing each individual to learn at their own pace and only move onto the next part of the programme when they feel ready
- Providing a mix of self managed study to encourage individual responsibility together with sufficient support and guidance when required
- The ability to develop volatile training content in an easily updateable format while creating non volatile content in a long lasting format
- Opportunities to use technology to deliver training, where appropriate, to increase the overall learning experience
- The ability to develop different elements of the training at different times, without delaying the overall programme delivery
- The possibility to learn from assessment and evaluation throughout the overall development cycle in order to improve later elements.

Conversely, there are certain trade-offs to be made, in that a blended learning solution can sometimes be complex and time consuming to develop. The right media must be chosen in order to obtain the anticipated performance improvement and all levels of staff need to be fully bought into the concept of self managed learning. As with all learning development prospects, a clear business case must exist, including identification of business measures and success factors as well as a calculation of all anticipated savings and costs in order to identify the expected Return On Investment (ROI).

## The Blended Approach



KnowledgePool's five stage approach to blended learning is described in more detail on the following pages.

### Analyse



The needs analysis phase includes the following activities:

- Meeting with the Sponsor(s) to confirm the scope, methodology and timescales for the analysis together with an identification of the key stakeholders, business needs and drivers, current situation, required future state and success measures
- Information gathering through a mix of one-to-one interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, reviews of current learning materials, performance management information, satisfaction surveys and business documentation

This enables us to identify:

- Vision and goals - what are your business drivers, aims, quantitative and qualitative measures of success of blended learning? What is your future training and development strategy?
- Business case – what is the business case for your investment in blended learning? How much will it cost initially and long term? What return on investment is required?
- Human infrastructure – who are your audience for each piece of learning, where are they based, what is their current attitude towards learning, what are current levels of skills and knowledge? What is required to ensure that your audience, HR community, line managers, senior managers and other stakeholders are ready for an on-line or e-learning approach?
- Technical infrastructure - what technical infrastructure is required to deliver the training? What infrastructure is available currently? What investment would be needed to create the ideal infrastructure?
- Blend methodology – what does an ideal solution look like in terms of scope/content and media? How can the learning be broken down into objectives, learning objects and topics to provide the best solution and media mix?
- Conversion of existing face to face workshops into blended solutions – how do you identify which programmes to convert and where the priorities lie? This subject is covered further in Appendix 1

- Processes and procedures – how can best practice be achieved in design, delivery and support?
- Evaluation – how should each solution be evaluated in order to learn lessons for the future?

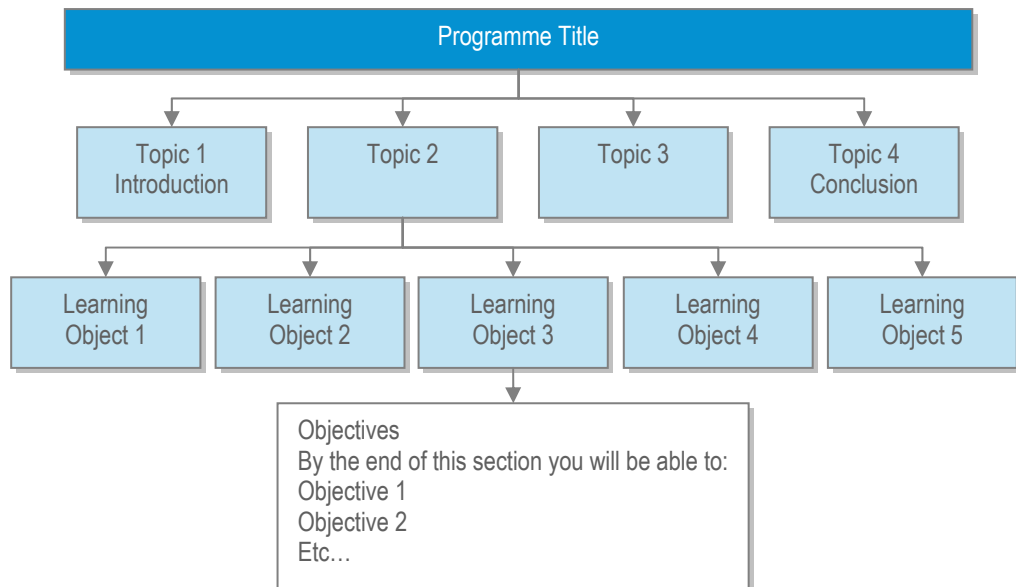
The deliverables from this phase include:

- Written and verbal reporting of findings, conclusions and costed recommendations
- An outline design specification (of all recommendations followed by a full design specification for any agreed options)

### Blend Methodology

As part of the outline and full design specifications, we begin to look at the method and order of delivery of the learning.

It is possible to do this by breaking the overall learning into individual objectives and learning objects and then building related objectives into topics as depicted below:



### Learning objectives

When designing learning programmes, it is good practice to begin by identifying the learning objectives. This is a useful principle, regardless of the learning medium (be it face-to-face workshop training, e-learning, workbook), because the learning objective is a statement that specifies what a learner must be able to do as a result of the instruction. It describes the outcome of the instruction – **not** the content - although it **can** specify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a learner needs to acquire.

By identifying the learning objectives required in any training programme, we are able to ensure not only that the solutions we produce fulfil our clients' expectations, but also that the most appropriate treatment is used in order for the learner to achieve those objectives.

### Learning objects

Learning objects are constructed from logical groupings of learning objectives. Whilst learning objectives are outcome-related, learning objects are content-related and can be defined as modular, free-standing, non-sequential units that are interchangeable within the framework of a learning programme.

The use of learning objects has become a standard in the field of blended learning design. This is because learning objects can be used to satisfy an immediate learning need whilst also providing the opportunity to quickly and efficiently construct new learning programmes from the same materials.

Longmire (2000<sup>1</sup>) lists the following benefits to this object-oriented approach:

- Flexibility – since learning objects are intended to be standalone and non-sequential, they facilitate reuse.
- Ease of maintenance – learning programmes that are constructed from learning objects are easier to update and maintain because, as learning programmes grow or content becomes out of date, it is easier to amend, delete or add one learning object than to change the whole programme.
- Customisation – modular learning objects maximise the potential to personalise software by permitting the recombination of material at the desired level of granularity.
- Interoperability – the learning object approach supports changing specifications in relation to differing organisational needs. With this approach, for example, a client could provide different branding on training for delivery to subsidiary groups within the same company.
- Facilitation of competency-based learning – competency-based learning focuses on the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required according to the needs of individual job roles, rather than to a particular training programme. By identifying the content, skills and attitudes embodied in a particular learning object, competency-based programmes can be constructed as required.
- Increased value of content – from the client (and the provider's) perspective, a piece of content gains value each time it is reused. This is reflected not only in the savings made by avoiding new design and development time, but also in the possibility of developing entirely new courses from the existing learning objects.

From the learner's perspective, an object-based approach makes it more feasible for them to fit their learning into several, short bursts of training rather than having to clear whole afternoons or even days for the same purpose. Independent learning objects also mean that there will always be a logical stopping point close at hand when attention spans begin to waiver or other demands call them away.

### Topics (content objects)

A detailed analysis and design approach ensures that every learning object will meet one or more specific learning objectives. In some cases, as the relevant learning points are identified and built up, it will become apparent that there are natural content groupings of learning objects.

By identifying and isolating each of these natural groupings - known as **topics** – we are able to build a programme where a learner can identify learning material down to **topic** level. This maximises the learner's ability to access short, sharp 'just-in-time' chunks of learning and facilitates easy access to units of refresher learning.

Once logical topics have been built up it is also possible to build the topics into a logical order and begin to identify the best method of delivery for each topic, or group of topics. This will depend on such factors as the size of the overall audience and the balance of knowledge or skill based objectives. This is explored further in the section entitled 'Deployment and Methods of Delivery'.

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<sup>1</sup>Longmire, W. (2000), *A Primer on Learning Objects*, ASTD Learning Circuits.

## Design and Develop



A key skill for modern Learning and Development Practitioners is the ability to design effective blended learning solutions to meet the specific and varied learning requirements. At this stage we consider both the instructional design of all elements as well as the visual design of any e-learning solutions. We also explore the specification of any training system and how to link into any learning management systems in order to ensure that the learning delivery is timely, smooth and integrated with any existing information systems.

Our learning solution design methodology considers:

### The Learning Content

#### ■ Type of learning:

- What type of learning is required – knowledge, skills, attitudinal?
- Is it the learning of facts, rules, processes, practical skills, cognitive skills and what level of judgement must be gained?
- How volatile is the learning material and how often will it need to be updated?
- How much is the material affected by legislation or codes of practice?
- How consistent must the learning be from one user to another?
- Does the learning have to be completed in parallel or as a series of modules?

#### ■ Testing:

- How much testing is required?
- Does the testing need to be formal accreditation or informal confirmation of learning?
- Are there any compliant regulations that mean trainees have to be signed off as competent through observation?

#### ■ Timescales:

- What are the timescales for delivery of the learning?
- Does the learning need to be available on a 'just in time' basis or can it be scheduled in advance?
- How long will the total learning take?

### The Learners

#### ■ Needs:

- What is the learning gap?
- What is their access to learning like?
- What past experiences of learning modes do they have and what learning styles predominate for different learning gaps?
- Who else needs to be aware of the learning?
- Do learners need to practice and demonstrate newly acquired skills?
- Do learners need to interact with 'experts' or colleagues during or after the learning?

■ Target Audience:

- Does this overall audience have different learning needs e.g. awareness only or detailed knowledge?
- What is the total target audience size for each piece of potential learning?
- How many learners need to be trained over what timescale?
- What is the geographical spread of the learners?
- How much time is available for learners to study?
- What other pressures will impact on their ability to study or attend training events?

■ Attitudes, skills and knowledge:

- How IT literate is the target audience?
- Do they have a positive attitude towards self managed learning?
- How consistent are the current levels of knowledge and skills amongst the target audience?
- How will you ensure that any new knowledge or skills are being applied successfully?

## The Organisation

■ Culture:

- What is the organisational culture?
- How much responsibility do line managers take towards personal development of their staff?
- Will line managers be a positive influence in encouraging the completion of the learning and act as coaches?

■ Resources:

- What budget and other resources are available for initial set-up, future development and ongoing maintenance costs?
- What are the possible delivery methods available within the organisation?
- Will learning be developed and maintained internally or through external suppliers?
- Who within the organisation will be responsible for sponsoring, owning, supplying and updating the content of any learning materials?
- Are there any other roles that can be utilised to support the learning and provide coaching?
- How many trainers are available?
- What is the best use of the trainer role within the organisation?

■ Technology:

- What infrastructure exists to deliver e-learning solutions?
- Does this infrastructure also have to support day to day business transactions?
- Is there a band width restriction on delivering e-learning through this infrastructure?
- What infrastructure will need to be developed to support e-learning delivery?
- How many employees will have access to e-learning?

- Will the operating system and hardware be the same for each employee?
- If not what is the lowest common denominator?
- Do employees have access to CD rom drives?
- Do PCs have sound cards and operational speakers?
- Will future IT developments allow for greater e-learning flexibility in the longer term?
- Will e-learning be accessible outside of the workplace?
- Can progress and test results be tracked on line?
- If not, what system will be used to monitor results and track success?

All design is carried out in close consultation with the client, with review and feedback activities built into the process at all stages to ensure that the final solution meets the needs of the client and learner.

In parallel with these activities we also consider the wider training support needs, including:

- Integration with any existing curriculum, or the development of a new curriculum
- How to ensure ongoing performance is supported, for example through communications and ongoing coaching
- The need to train any trainers involved in running workshops or masterclasses
- The overall launch programme and scheduling needs

## Deploy



To ensure full programme delivery, KnowledgePool offers design and development of a comprehensive blend of delivery methods, each of which is explored further here.

### Bespoke e-learning materials

In many cases, the production of bespoke e-learning will be the optimal solution for the effective delivery of large elements of existing face-to-face materials or new learning needs. Well designed bespoke e-learning offers a number of advantages including:

- Availability of small, targeted chunks of accessible learning
- Increased learner control
- Ability to cater for different learning styles
- Consistency
- Ease of maintenance
- Desktop delivery (via the appropriate infrastructure)

The types of e-learning employed can be classified into six broad categories:

### 1. Interactive tutorials

Learning points are presented in a series of short, sharp tutorial sequences, accompanied by graphical illustrations where these are deemed useful. Learners are challenged throughout the tutorial by a series of questions, which ensure that the learners 'stop and think' about the key aspects of the programme.

### 2. Interactive case studies

In some cases, *context* is the key to effective learning. Simple case studies will be used where the application of skills and knowledge in a real-life environment will aid the learning experience. For example, case studies may assist learners to view a product, situation or challenge from the point of view of a customer or a colleague and to practise their decision making skills in a safe, yet realistic environment.

### 3. Guided research support

E-learning modules will not always be the most effective - or cost-effective - solution. In many cases, it will be beneficial for learners to obtain knowledge from other sources - e.g. existing reference material, product literature, internet or intranet-based information sources. Where this is the case, learners will be directed to the relevant materials from the bespoke e-learning programme.

In some of these instances the learning process will be enhanced by providing the learner with the opportunity to check their understanding of the new information. By answering a series of relevant questions on return to the bespoke e-learning package learners can assess their understanding and consolidate their learning.

### 4. Self-assessment knowledge checks

Self-assessment knowledge checks will be interspersed throughout the bespoke e-learning. The use of questions to check understanding will be an integral part of the interactive tutorials and case studies, as well as backup for the guided research support.

Feedback to the questions will be used to enhance knowledge as well as to provide support and encouragement to the learner.

Feedback can be provided:

- At the end of each question - stating whether the answer was right or wrong and providing explanations, where relevant  
and / or
- At the end of an assessment - identifying any weak areas and, where necessary, pointing learners back to the original information source for further study or towards further remedial learning

Questions need not be scored and results need not be tracked. The purpose of these knowledge checks is rather to enable the learner to quantify his or her understanding of the material, to provide increased interactivity and to improve knowledge retention.

### 5. Pre-course diagnostic assessments

There may be occasions where some learners are likely to have significant prior knowledge of parts of the course materials. In these instances it will be of benefit to assess the individual learner's prior knowledge before they embark upon the programme.

By completing a short pre-course diagnostic assessment, learners can be directed straight to those areas of content where a knowledge gap has been defined. In this way, they can avoid having to plough through materials that they are already familiar with.

## 6. Formal assessments

Some of the programmes may be designed to prepare the learner for internal or external accreditation exams. In these instances, it will be beneficial for the learner to undergo a formal assessment, such as a mock examination, prior to undertaking the exam itself.

## Generic e-learning materials

Generic e-learning packages may be identified as appropriate to meet particular learning needs. The *bespoke* e-learning will be carefully designed to make effective use of any generic solutions available.

## Printable workbooks and worksheets

While interactive e-learning modules offer a number of advantages to the learner, there are times during large programmes when it is beneficial to provide elements of knowledge in a more traditional manner.

Printable workbooks are effectively open-learning workbooks held on a computer. While employing the tried and tested design principles of paper-based workbooks, the printable workbook has the added advantage of offering learners a choice of usage. They can print off either all or part of the module for reading elsewhere (e.g. at home or on the train) or, alternatively, they can read the material 'on-line' by paging through the content.

Where a printable workbook requires the learner to record any thoughts or answers (e.g. What would you like to change about the way your current team is working? What is the first step in making this change and where might you need support?) the learner will be instructed to print out the pages in question for completion.

The effectiveness of printable workbooks is maximised when combined with an e-learning diagnostic assessment. After completing a printable workbook a learner will be prompted to return to the core learning (i.e. the on-line e-learning). When they do so, their next task may be to complete an assessment based around the content of the printable workbook. This not only enables learners to check their understanding but also helps to negate one of the major traditional weaknesses of workbooks - that the materials are often not sufficiently engaging to motivate the learner to study the contents properly.

On occasion, it will be beneficial for learners to take a physical checklist or worksheet away from the learning PC to aid their ongoing development. For example, on completing an Induction programme new entrants may have a list of actions to carry out during their first days with the organisation. In other cases, learners may be presented with a list of best practice tips, which they can print out as a checklist to aid them during tasks and activities.

## Guided research

Much of the knowledge within an organisation is already stored and presented in a cohesive manner. For example, the features and benefits of a service are available in customer brochures and leaflets while the related technical and procedural data may be available in user guides or quick reference guides.

Rather than taking this information and re-presenting it as part of an e-learning tutorial it is beneficial to direct learners to the original source material. In many cases, learners will be directed to look for specific, relevant elements of the content before returning to the e-learning to undertake a short assessment of their understanding.

Other sources, such as books and other external reference material, contain a vast array of useful information without exhibiting all the elements of a successful self-learning experience. Where appropriate, learners will be guided to specific elements of any material before returning to undertake focused diagnostic assessments designed to provide a 'spot-check' on the learning.

If appropriate user guides or quick reference guides do not already exist, they can be developed as part of the overall learning solution.

## Workshops

Well-focused classroom learning experiences still have an important part to play in an integrated learning solution. Short, highly participative workshops can be developed where appropriate.

Workshops may be appropriate in the following instances:

- Where the workshop is intended to be a 'masterclass' - enabling learners who have completed the preceding 'non-workshop' learning to practise advanced skills and techniques with the support of an experienced facilitator
- Where the learning involves the need to exhibit key practical skills and/or behaviours
- Where the peer support element of the classroom environment is considered to be a key factor

Focused workshops offer benefits for both learners and facilitators as much of the factual 'lecturing' element will be dealt with more effectively by other media. As a result, facilitators and learners will be able to make better use of valuable classroom time.

## Video / DVD

Video and DVD can be used to communicate a key message to a large number of people.

They can also provide a useful method of observing either best practice or poor behaviour in a safe environment. Learning can be encouraged through observation checklists and discussion of the behaviours shown. Such exercises are best conducted within a workshop environment to facilitate discussion and agree on the correct behaviours.

## Learner Support

Additional support can be provided through:

- Line manager or learning facilitator roles acting as coaches, mentors and giving pre and post-learning support
- Floorwalkers giving ongoing support to newly trained individuals
- Action learning activities developed to enable individuals to put their learning into action in a safe environment
- Generic learning and specific programme guides provided as e-learning or printable materials
- Awareness briefings and posters for both the main target audience and any secondary audiences that require basic knowledge of the programme.

## Selecting the appropriate method of delivery

Having discussed the various methods of delivery, we can now look at how to select the most appropriate to meet the specific learning needs of a particular programme.

Ultimately any method can partially cover any learning objective. This is most obvious in sport where books on "How to play Golf", or any other sport, are plentiful. The constraints of time and cost may well force the production of a product with a less than satisfactory coverage of the full learning objectives. For example, a language phrase book does not enable you to conduct a conversation.

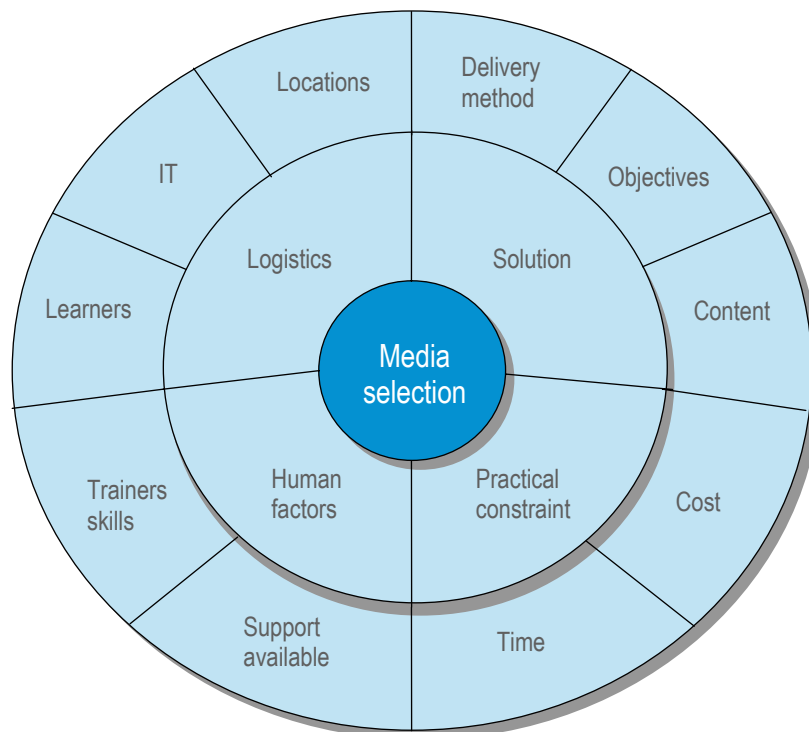
In reality your selection should be made based on the type of change you need to introduce:

- If it is a **skill** you need to provide practice and feedback
- If it is **knowledge** you need to present the material and test understanding
- If it is **attitude** you need to show a role model, provide supporting reasons for change (both emotional and logical), and provide practice in the behaviour shown

In addition you also need to consider:

- Practical constraints, e.g. cost and time
- The learner's preferences
- What you are best equipped to use

These considerations are shown in the diagram below:



The tables overleaf show a list of the advantages and disadvantages of each learning method and which method best meets different types of training need.

## Advantages and disadvantages

Media and Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. e-learning	Consistent, cost-effective delivery to large audience. Can be interactive. Can involve testing to check understanding. Can direct learner to other learning media and activities. Self-paced. Includes the benefits of games, simulations and visual images. Can simulate real applications.	Needs large audiences to justify the large development cost. Information is mainly delivered by text. Requires infrastructure to deliver.
2. Workbooks and worksheets	Flexible, portable, economical, random access, allows note-taking. Self-paced. Most students are familiar with use. Permanent. Allows access at students 'pace and place'.	Depends on the study skills and motivation of the student. Essentially passive with no essential mastery of performance objectives before a student can continue. No testing of understanding.
3. Guided research	Uses information that is already available and avoids reinventing unnecessary materials. Will be updated in line with business requirements.	Can be very dry subject matter. Needs to be reinforced through other methods and testing.
4. Instructional Workshops	Very flexible and economical to develop. A skilled trainer can prepare a course very quickly and can cope with many different students. Can include a range of learning activities.	Variable quality, totally dependent on the skill of the trainer. Run at the pace of the trainer not the trainee. Encourages a teacher-student dependency. May not be interactive. High costs to deliver.
5. Practical Workshops	Allows interactivity. Can test the students' understanding by practical exercises. Allows discussion, questions and feedback. Cheap and flexible. Range of learning styles easily exercised. Can be used for role plays or case studies.	Dependent on the skill of the instructor. Good exercises take time to design. Can be difficult to run as students learn at different speeds. Role plays are different to write and need good 'players'. High costs to deliver.
6. Video / DVD	Visual impact, shows improvement. Can be used for large audiences. People like watching video. Can cover an enormous amount of information. Can be entertaining. Good at presenting a message with impact. Visual images are most readily retained in memory.	A passive medium over which the student has no control. No testing of understanding. Conveys enormous amounts of information. Can be too entertaining. Very expensive to make, involves many specific skills and roles; script writing, filming, audio, acting, etc.
7. Learner support	Can be the best if the trainee gets gradual practice and feedback on real issues. Simulated learning, eg management games, in-tray exercises, etc. can be interactive, enjoyable.	Totally dependent on the quality of the support. Can be easy to rely too much on the support being given.

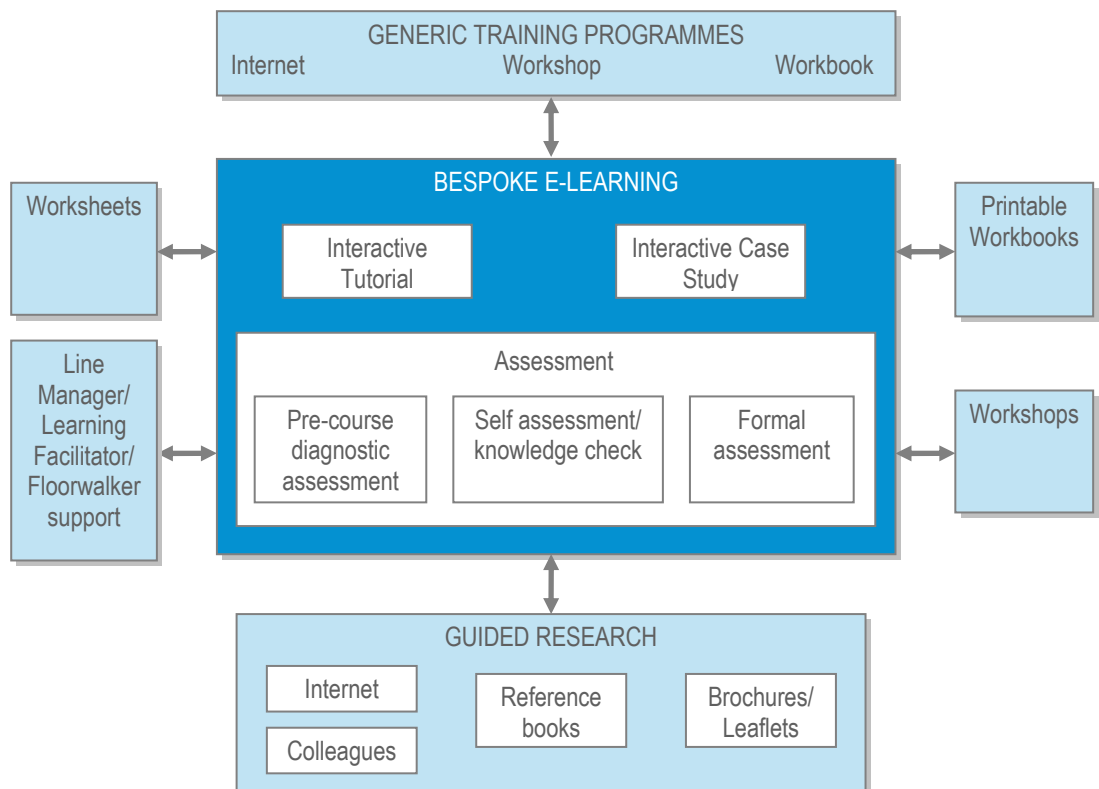
## Training requirement and appropriate methods

Training Requirement	e-learning	e-learning simulation of applications	Workbooks/ Worksheets	Guided research	Instructional / Practical workshops	Video / DVD	Learner support
Rote Knowledge	✓			✓			
Rote Knowledge Testing	✓						
Numerical Knowledge	✓		✓	✓			
Numerical Reasoning	✓		✓		✓		✓
Aural Feedback	poss	poss			✓		✓
Visual Feedback		✓					✓
Kinaesthetic Feedback	✓	✓					✓
Record-keeping	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Verbal Skills					✓		✓
Mental Skills	✓		✓		✓		✓
Self Development	✓		✓			✓	✓
Process Knowledge	✓		✓	✓			
Equipment Interaction					✓		✓
Logical Reasoning	✓		✓				✓
Management Techniques	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Sales Techniques					✓		✓
Interpersonal Interactions	✓				✓	✓	✓

## Creating a cohesive blend

Having discussed the key components of the learning solution, we need to address the question of how these components will fit together to provide a cohesive, practical and effective learning experience.

While each training programme has its own unique features and solution, it is fair to say that the *core* of the blended solution in most cases will be some form of bespoke e-learning. The other elements link into the e-learning and can be completed before, after or during the e-learning elements, as required. At appropriate points within the e-learning, learners will be directed to other components of the learning solution.



As part of the overall deployment of a programme we can also offer all of the following services:

- Training programme and project management using best practice through extensive experience in the training marketplace
- A large and flexible pool of training delivery resources, experienced in a wide variety of programmes
- Use of the KnowledgePool High Performance training administration and learning management solution. Our tried and tested approach to the successful delivery of training programmes

## Assess



KnowledgePool uses online questionnaires to collate end of course evaluation feedback for all our delegate bookings, irrespective of where, when or by whom the training was delivered. This service, which equates to Level 1 of Dr Donald Kirkpatrick's original 1959 methodology, can easily be enhanced by Dr Jack J Phillips' more recent work to deliver a number of additional benefits, including calculating the Return On Investment (ROI) of training.

Any evaluation involves a level of specialist design input, including:

- Understanding the objectives for the evaluation, helping the client define the objectives if necessary
- Identifying the data sources and choosing the most appropriate method(s) of data collection (e.g. questionnaires, face to face interviews and telephone interviews)
- Careful question design
- Understanding how the collected data will be analysed to achieve the objective

KnowledgePool's Learning Consultants are familiar with evaluation techniques and we also apply principles pioneered by Dr Jack J Phillips (for example estimation, isolation and adjustment) to quantify findings in order to build up business benefit and ROI calculations.

Where a client has an existing Learning Management System (LMS) in operation, evaluation of a blended learning solution can be easily facilitated and the results tracked. The completion of e-learning elements can be directly linked into the LMS, ensuring that the learner is directed to the correct learning, that their progress is tracked and that any assessment results are recorded for future reference. The completion of other types of learning can also be input into the LMS to ensure the total learning programme is recorded. Evaluation questionnaires can be sent out automatically on completion of a piece of learning and reminders sent if required. This method can also be used for pre-assessment and is extremely valuable in the case of large scale needs analysis or training roll-outs to avoid the 'sheep-dip' approach of forcing everyone through the same learning irrespective of their prior knowledge.

Where an existing LMS does not exist within a client site, KnowledgePool can introduce their High Performance training administration and learning management system to add greater value to the overall service being offered.

One of the advantages of a blended learning solution is that it may be possible to evaluate initial elements of the overall training programme whilst later elements are still in development. This results in an ability to improve the later materials, based on user feedback, prior to delivery.

## Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the KnowledgePool approach to blended learning. However, we are aware that developing a blended solution involves so many variable factors that no two solutions will be the same. We have also had wide experience in dealing with the range of expected and unexpected risks and issues that always arise during the analysis and design process. Whilst our Learning Consultants and Project Managers are well versed in using a standard methodology, they are also flexible and able to react to each individual client's needs to ensure that the final solution suits the business and the individual users and results in a real performance improvement.

## Appendix: Converting existing face to face workshops into blended solutions

The table below lists the criteria that need to be considered when looking at how to identify existing face-to-face programmes to convert to a blended solution, together with some specific questions that will provide you with solid facts on which to base your decisions. By answering these questions for each of your current face to face workshops, you can identify both which materials are suitable for conversion and the priority order based on business needs.

Current usage	How many programmes have been delivered in the past six months? Twelve months?
Trainer requirements	How many trainers are required to run this programme?
Delegates	How many delegates have attended this programme in the last six, twelve months?
Length of programme	How many days?
Type of content	What type of content is contained in the programme? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Knowledge</li> <li>■ Skills</li> <li>■ Behaviour</li> </ul> More specifically does the programme cover Processes, product knowledge, attitude, role definition
Future requirements	What is the anticipated future demand for this programme? How many programmes have been scheduled for the next quarter? How does this programme fit with the business plan? Does this programme fit in with local training plans.
Shelf-life	What is the anticipated shelf-life of the programme? Is the content relatively up-to-date? Is the material likely to be rendered obsolete by new business projects in progress or planned?
Waiting-lists	Is there a waiting list? How long?
Specialism	Is the content specialist to the organisation or business unit?
Total target audience	What is the potential target audience for this programme now and in the future?
Delegate costs	What is the cost of delegate materials for this programme? What are the typical delegate expenses submitted for this programme?
Maintenance	How volatile is this material? What are the typical costs for maintenance?
Accreditation	Is programme currently accredited either stand-alone or part of package? Is the programme tested?
Evaluation	Has the programme been evaluated? What did the results indicate?