

STRATEGY BRIEF

How to Make Simulations Your Learning Secret Weapon



by Claude Werder



Learning & Development



Talent Management



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



Leadership Development



Talent Acquisition



Workforce Management/HR

CURRENT STATE

In today's rapidly changing business environment, organizations must continually evaluate how to most effectively develop their employees' skills and performance.

Simulations are a powerful tool for corporate Learning and Development and they work well in a variety of impactful ways. They:

- Increase speed to performance by upskilling learners faster.
- Re-engage learners who are burned out from ILT and eLearning by using smarter and more advanced technology.
- Improve the application of new skills by increasing time to practice and reducing the forgetting curve.
- Build agility by practicing skills in challenging situations, but in a low-stakes, safe environment.

For example, simulations are great for leadership development.

How Do We Improve Leadership Training?

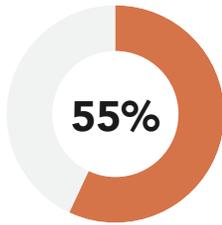
85% More focus on practical skills needed for future roles

82% Dedicated sessions to help new leaders or leaders new to a role

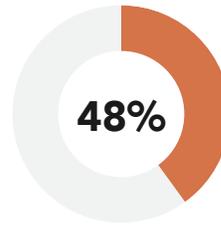
75% Working sessions with peers to discuss their experiences and how they resolve situations

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, How Do We Improve Leadership Development Training?

Simulations have proven to be an effective way to upskill and reskill the global workforce. Their use is increasing:



55% of organizations report that online simulations will remain the same or increase in use as a learning modality over the next 12 months.



48% of organizations that online simulations are highly or moderately effective as an instructional technique.

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, Learning Benchmarking 2023

COMPLEXITIES

Without simulations, organizations miss the opportunity to accelerate skill development through applied and experiential learning in a safe environment. Employees may be left unprepared to deal with critical situations, leading to mistakes that negatively impact customers and the business. Simulations provide immersive, experiential learning opportunities that drive increased engagement and knowledge retention compared to passive learning methods.

With possibilities across Leadership, Human Resources, Finance, Operations, Sales and more, customized simulations unlock immense potential for developing employees, building critical skills and elevating organizational performance through hands-on learner engagement.

The broad applicability makes simulations a versatile training solution with measurable impact when applied strategically across any business function.

Heaviest Expected Investment in Leadership Development in 2024

70%

of organizations plan to increase simulations and cohort-based learning for leaders to practice and apply new skills to understand their readiness.

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, HCM Outlook 2024

Flexible use of simulations expands their potential beyond mere training tools. They serve as powerful instruments for assessment, microlearning, team-building and interactive workshops, enabling individuals and teams to move from merely “knowing” to actually “doing,” which increases self-awareness and enhances problem-solving abilities. Here are just a few applications:

> **Assessment**

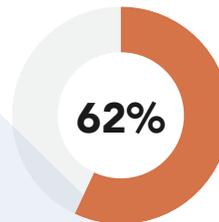
The simulation serves as an assessment tool to help participants gain awareness of their strengths, growth areas, biases and blind spots. By immersing individuals in simulated scenarios, this approach allows them to reflect on their behavior and decision-making processes.

> **Microlearning & eLearning**

Simulations are used to provide knowledge-level learning and the necessary practice to accelerate the learning process. By combining theoretical knowledge with practical application, simulations offer a comprehensive and applied learning experience that enhances understanding and skill development.

> **Team development**

Team-based simulations transform and create dynamic online experiences where participants learn and grow together. By fostering collaboration and interaction among team members, these simulations create an engaging and immersive learning environment that promotes collective problem-solving.



of organizations plan moderate or heavy investment in team development in 2024.

Source: Brandon Hall Group™ Study, HCM Outlook 2024

> **Workshops**

Workshop simulations are also being used to flip the traditional classroom setting. Instead of passive learning, participants actively work together to confront challenges presented by the simulation. This hands-on approach encourages active participation, critical thinking and the application of knowledge in a practical context.

BENEFITS

When designed and implemented strategically, simulations offer significant benefits, including:

- Learner engagement
- Evidence that learners can apply knowledge and skills to real business situations
- Risk mitigation
- Scalability
- Consistency
- Cost-effectiveness
- Transferable skills

Simulations provoke thinking about business decisions along with how those decisions impact people. Feedback on the simulation provides insights into how clients, peers and coworkers perceive the learner. The overall experience helps them evaluate themselves and set priorities for improvement. Immersion and reaction from others motivate mindset shifts and change.

CASE IN POINT

Large Global Bank Embraces Agility to Increase Growth, Customer Satisfaction

A large global bank wanted to increase the agility of the workforce as a strategy to facilitate anticipated, large-scale organizational growth. Employees needed to improve their capabilities to deliver a client-centric, comprehensive customer experience while operating in a constantly evolving environment.

The solution implemented was a team-based, competitive simulation with technology-enabled experiential activities. The simulation storyline unfolded and learners practiced applying the skills and receiving system-generated feedback, a performance dashboard and a powerful in-person facilitated debrief after each round. This simulation program had a global rollout that adjusted for unique regional focus. Feedback on the simulation was positive — all participants reported having confidence in their ability to apply what they learned.

CASE IN POINT

Professional Services Company Improves Margins and Client Satisfaction

The company needed to upskill professionals to increase revenue while also increasing client satisfaction. A self-guided simulation included a team rollup to review and discuss the impact of decisions made by the learner. This solution provided the convenience of a self-paced module, as well as the benefit of team learning and team coaching, because participants formed groups and coached each other.

This solution provided the scalability needed to develop thousands of learners in only two weeks. The longitudinal data showed that learners who went through the simulation-based program increased margins and client satisfaction. This was compared to learners who did not participate in the simulation. These metrics also showed that transference — the extent to which participants applied what they learned — was high.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Here are some critical questions that organizations should consider and answer when considering simulations:



What are my organization's most urgent learning needs and how can simulations help us get results?



What qualities do we need in an external simulation provider?



What expertise does the L&D team need to use simulations?



How can we prove that simulations are effective in improving skills and performance?



What can we rely on a technology provider for?

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1 Find the Right Experts and Technology

A combination of technical and instructional design expertise leads to the most effective simulation development. Some organizations have the internal expertise to take control of learning design and development and create simulations independently. But you must weigh the time involved and whether internal development limits other objectives. It's important to seek a simulation provider that can provide the technology and the expertise to execute simulations if you so choose.

2 Contextualize and Personalize Experiential Learning

The best experiential learning, and the best simulations, are highly specific to the context of the learner, the learner persona or team. Learning programs should reflect the organization's terminology, strategic imperatives and industry and competitive context. For the learner, the content should be personalized to where they are on their learning journey and reflect the specific challenges and tensions in their roles. Brain science tells us learning that is personal and contextual is more meaningful and memorable.



3 Select Your Training Focus and Define Your Approach

Simulations can fit many different learning scenarios, but it is important to determine your focus and approach. Here are several criteria and dimensions of experiential learning to consider as you pursue a strategy:

- **Experiences** — What is the best fit for your learning objectives? (i.e., simulated role-play, team simulation, assessment.)
- **Session duration** — 5-15 minutes, 20-45 minutes, several hours, days, a weeks-long journey, etc.
- **Delivery modalities** — This includes individual, team, virtual, in-person, facilitator-led, cohort journey and more.
- **Types of skill building** — Leadership, professional development, business acumen, sales enablement, role readiness, etc.
- **Desired behavior change** — Mindset shift, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, improved decision-making and more.
- **Scoring and feedback types** — Should the simulation reveal the impact of decisions made in the simulation, quantitatively measure performance and create competition? Something else?
- **Level of adaptive learning** — Should you use simple or complex branching, construct personal learning paths, provide resources based on performance in the simulation, or provide custom feedback?

4 Leverage Integrated Analytics to Understand Learning Impact

In today's environment, reporting usage data and analytics are fundamental expectations. Analytics tools should be integrated into simulations to collect data on user behavior, performance and engagement. Proving the effectiveness of learning and development simulations in improving skills and performance can be done through various methods.

- To assess the long-term impact of the simulation, track participants' job performance over time. This can help identify whether the skills acquired during the simulation have been retained and continue to contribute to improved performance.
- Gather case studies and success stories from participants who have benefited from the simulation. These real-life examples can demonstrate the effectiveness of the simulation in improving skills and performance.
- Conduct pre- and post-assessments to measure learners' skill levels and performance both before and after the simulation. Comparing the results can illustrate improvement and demonstrate the effectiveness of simulations.
- Whenever possible, use a combination of methods to gather comprehensive evidence of the effectiveness of simulations.

Authors and Contributors



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About The Regis Company

AI-supported.
Human-centered.

With over 20 years of business in the industry, The Regis Company understands that in the world of Learning & Development, real experience now reigns supreme over mere content.

Our human-centered, AI-supported simulations are crafted to redefine experiential learning for the enterprise sector, merging technological sophistication with a deep understanding of human learning needs.

We're on a mission to prove how experiential learning develops skills beyond simply understanding and into meaningful application. This approach is at the heart of what we do, creating learning experiences that are not only engaging but also transformative to career development.

At the forefront of this customized learning revolution is our commitment to making experiential learning not only easier to create but also more impactful than ever before.



50+

AWARDS

25+

FORTUNE 500 CUSTOMERS

200+

PROGRAMS

1,200,000+

LEARNERS ACROSS
6 CONTINENTS

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