

What do you think will be the top trends in eLearning this year?

With the explosion of new technologies, and the rapid growth of audience and market size, 2014 stands to be a big year for the eLearning community.

We asked a panel of forward-thinking industry experts including James Cory-Wright of Brightwave and Mark Harrison of Kineo, to reveal what they thought the key trends will be over the next 12 months. We also wanted to know what role they saw video playing in eLearning in a world where over [6 billion hours of video](#) are currently watched each month on YouTube.

The results are exciting and compelling, with five main areas of focus emerging from our interviews:

1. The advancement of continuous and social learning.
2. The increased use of mobile and tablet devices.
3. Video playing a more significant role in eLearning.
4. More creative content being developed (especially in video).
5. eLearning being used as an effective staff retention tool.

These five trends form the structure for this white paper, before we conclude with our own thoughts on the year ahead.

Our Panel

James Cory-Wright: Head of Learning Design at Brightwave

David Dwyer: Head of Blended Learning and Internal Sales at Capita Learning and Development

Mark Harrison: Director of Kineo

Tom Hickmore: Creative Director at Nice Media

Jacqui Nelson: Director of Nelson Croom

Louise Pasterfield: Managing Director of Sponge UK and **Carly Stuart:** Project Manager at Sponge UK (spoke to us together on a conference call)

Anita Sullivan: Veteran instructional designer and dramatist

Donald H Taylor: Chairman of The Learning and Performance Institute

1. Learning on demand

Continuous and social learning

Learners have been empowered by technology to be able to learn continuously and are initiating their own learning as opposed to waiting to be taught. Kineo wrote, in their '[Learning Insights Report](#)', 'what is emerging is a 'learning at the speed of need' and 'the concept of pervasive learning is that learning is not trapped in a learning management system or in books or in formal learning but is continuous'.

The thinking now is that learning is not limited to courses but, as Donald H Taylor stated, 'people are expecting learning to be taking place everywhere throughout the organisation, [in] formal and in informal ways'.

This creates a challenge for those who create eLearning - how to manage perpetual learning?

Social learning

Social learning is a major part of continuous learning. ELearning technologists have to become more aware of how employees are learning from each other, as well as from managed eLearning courses.

However, tracking how employees learn from one another is difficult to administer. This creates an 'interesting dilemma', as noted by Mark Harrison: 'Can you make informal formal?'

Technological advancements in social media have created a social expectation from eLearning. Jacqui Nelson comments, 'One of the big changes that has happened over the last five years is that people do expect to communicate online in all parts of their life. The fact that this is now perfectly possible really needs to be incorporated into eLearning as well'.

How do we make sharing happen?

We can see that some eLearning companies are dealing with this head on and trying to incorporate social learning into their learning mechanism.

A good example is Brightwave's adaptable learning system 'Tessello', which Brightwave explain as 'Ideal for large teams or organisational groups that share a need. Learners interact with curated content including videos, infographics and PDFs, eLearning courses and live online training plus content shared and recommended by peers'.

This is part of what Donald H Taylor described as 'being a networked individual', we now expect to 'share openly about things'.

All about the individual

This trend results in a personalisation of eLearning. The demand is now to tailor eLearning to each person, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Jacqui Nelson explains that, 'Individuals are expecting a system and learning to recognise them and their needs. Not just deliver up that one set route for everybody and everybody is going to get the same thing. In the same way as if you log on to Amazon or Facebook'.

2. Changing with technology

Mobile and tablet learning

A significant theme mentioned by nearly all interviewees, was the advancement of mobile learning. James Cory-Wright comments that over the next year it will become 'a kind of given that eLearning should be able to run on whatever devices people have'. This again shows that the advances in technology are changing the way learners expect to engage and use eLearning.

Content may have to change to fit the device. This may mean using different mobile devices to support different parts of the eLearning courses.

Multiple devices

There will also be a need for these devices to work together. As James Cory-Wright comments 'Smart phones might be used as a performance support so people can just pick up a phone and quickly reference something if they need it'.

Whereas it's unlikely you would conduct a full training course on a smart phone, you'd probably rather do that on a tablet or on a PC or a laptop. But, there is now more demand for all devices to be used in some way in an eLearning course.

David Dwyer, notes 'what we're seeing is a greater acceptance of multi-media and blended learning to deliver effective training'.

Keeping up with technology

As technology changes, people's expectations of their learning systems change. Which is why Kineo says 'where the web goes, learning will follow'. ELearning has to keep up with these technological changes.

Mark Harrison explains: 'People are saying, well there's no point in me creating something in Flash, because in a few years it won't be able to display in things that in the future will be standard, which will be people using tablets and things like that....So HTML 5 is the only HTML and HTML 5 is the only path, really technically, in the future. Everyone's going to decide when to jump ship from their old world into the new world'.

Curating and caring

But what about the existing eLearning systems?

As Louise Pasterfield observes 'eLearning curation is going to be more important. That's actually caring and looking after your modules, keeping them up to date and making sure that what you've got on your learning management systems is relevant and up to date for your learners'.

This is going to provide a challenge for those with new devices which don't support the old eLearning systems. Mark Harrison notes: 'Quite a few organisations have just bought iPads galore for groups of learners and, even if you buy an Android or a tablet, it isn't going to be supporting Flash any more'.

So eLearning curation may mean changing content to work with the new devices.

3. Time for video

The increasing role of video in eLearning

There was agreement throughout the panel that video is increasingly important in eLearning – and should be even more so. Tom Hickmore notes that 'the demand for video is definitely growing'.

Donald H Taylor says, '2014 should be the year when video is established as a major learning tool in most organisations'. Video has now become such an established part of eLearning that, as James Cory-Wright simply put it, 'people won't settle for anything less'.

Tom Hickmore observed, 'video is already technically well suited for mobile devices, which are on a speedy rise as learning platforms and we're already delivering more there.'

Drama

As well as being an engaging means eLearning tool, video can often be the best way to explain content. David Dwyer comments that, 'we use video both embedded in eLearning, but also in scenarios. The sorts of videos we really like to see are those ones where you're showing not only best practice, but also slightly dodgy practice'. Video is becoming more popular because it can deliver more understandable explanations of how operations should be conducted.

Stand alone

There is a heavier reliance on video as the singular medium to deliver eLearning. Anita Sullivan noted 'It's interesting that I'm seeing a lot more stand-alone video than I have for a long time, as in video that's not within a backbone of either classroom training or eLearning'. However as Louise Pasterfield observed another trend is that video is also being used in 'chunking, breaking modules down into smaller chunks'.

Video is becoming increasingly important in eLearning, whether it be on its own or used as part as part of a wider eLearning programme. This is because video works. We are 5 times more likely to retain information if [we watch it as opposed to read it.](#)

4. The creativity of content

Trends in video

ELearning in general is becoming more creative. ELearning companies need to be more creative to support the demand for continuous and social learning, if they are going to incorporate more mobile learning and video.

James Cory-Wright explains, 'there's plenty of scope for creativity if you use video and motion graphics, or animations and things like that'.

Tom Hickmore comments, 'higher demand for video for learning will make it like TV. There's 100 channels to fill, so there's a huge market for "good enough" content, (say the Eddie Stobart reality show), but volume also makes high quality shows seem thinner on the ground. '*'TV isn't as good as it used to be'*. So a significant audience will pay extra to watch the likes of Breaking Bad and Madmen.'

Higher standards in video mean people are pushed to be more creative. The chances are – the more creative a video is, the more engaging it will be.

Louise Pasterfield noticed a trend towards interactive use of video; putting 'links in video, you've got a video quiz within video so you can pause it, you can do a quiz, you've got videos chapters and you can draw on video'. This is a great example of a much more creative take on teaching in video and how it can keep your audience engaged.

5. Forward thinking

Retaining and socially educating employees

ELearning is responding to an improving economy and a more buoyant and competitive job market.

Donald H Taylor: 'good people are always harder to find and in particular the people who are dissatisfied at work at the moment are more likely to be able to leave and find work in 2014'. So companies want to upskill their existing good employees, rather than lose them to competitors.

Tom Hickmore thinks , 'More investment in learning means your employees become more valuable assets. And the desire keep them means learning will become increasingly branded. Embedding values and behaviours in learning will become more and more important.'

Training staff, keeping staff

Good employees are more likely to stay with better in-house training. ELearning Industry notes: 'It's been estimated that nearly 25% of all employees leave their job because there simply aren't enough training or learning opportunities. On the other hand, companies who do offer e-Learning and on-the-job training generate about 26% more revenue per employee'. Thus companies have great motivation to make sure their eLearning systems are up to scratch.

Emotional intelligence

In order to retain employees, it is also important to make sure they feel comfortable in the work place. There is a growing trend of trying to socially educate employees. Anita Sullivan commented, 'I seem to be getting a lot of diversity and inclusion training to do at the moment. What's interesting about that is that you can, that there is a perceivable gap between teaching the knowledge and feeling confident that people actually have the skills'.

Tom Hickmore notes, 'Dramatised video scenarios get past natural resistance to training in these areas by engaging empathy, and by showing rather than being directly didactic.'

More emphasis is being placed on educating audiences in social awareness. Anita Sullivan explains that eLearning is 'going to go down the lines of emotional intelligence'. Educating employees about respecting each other and social intelligence will make for happier workforces who are more likely to stay within the company.

Summary

The consensus within the panel was that technology is changing and eLearning is changing in response. People now expect more from eLearning: to track continuous learning, availability on a range of devices, to include video, and for that video to be creative content. Companies want their eLearning to be as up-to-date as possible so they can train their existing employees and keep them!

These trends mean that there are clear challenges for this year:

- Developing eLearning systems which can incorporate social and continuous learning
- Making sure that eLearning can be delivered on multiple devices
- Using more video
- Using video creatively
- Delivering eLearning which supports staff and focuses on staff retention

