

Creating a Globally Diverse Training Program

Demands for a Global Audience

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Consider Your Audience

As organizational economies change, training and development professionals begin to look for ways to touch more of their audience quicker, more efficiently, and with less cost. When you consider the next training program, think about creating a program that reaches out to a broad audience - and can be adapted to fit wherever the program is implemented. This globally diverse program will have a more efficient reach - and may cost less in the long run. The first step in creating a globally diverse training program is to analyze your audience. Let's look at some great ways to carry out this step.

First, the most obvious aspect is to examine your current audience. Is this audience in expansion or are you already dealing with an audience that is spread out geographically and culturally? On the other hand, are you looking for new ways to connect an organizational audience that has been separated by that geography and culture? A globally diverse training program can help bring the walls between groups down and lead to many cross-functional benefits.

Next, look at your audiences and their "every day" existence. You may all work for the same organization, but that might be one of the only similarities. Don't assume that groups within the same country share the same characteristics, either. Think about the United States and its regional differences - there are differences in culture, speech, work styles, and business processes. But if your organization is truly global, you must examine this aspect of your training audience much more closely. How will people from the U.S. interact with an audience that is halfway across the world?

Nuances between cultures truly change when you cross international borders - business processes, culture, business etiquette, and every day life must be incorporated into any program.

While you consider your audience, think about where they are located geographically. How will you reach them? What methods are available within the organization to deliver training effectively across the miles? We will discuss this aspect of global training in more detail later, but as you begin to analyze the situation the geographic spread and how to bridge it must be a consideration in your program development.

Perhaps your organization is not spread out geographically or culturally. Is there a need to create training with a global reach? There may be. What if your organization wants to outsource training to "sister" organizations throughout the world? What if the organization is beginning an expansion or is just in the planning stages of an expansion. Your training should be ready to go, that is, the organization should be able to pick it up and deliver it to a wide audience at any point in time.

Keep in mind that audience analysis is not a "one way" road, especially when you are dealing with cross-cultural groups. The key in audience analysis is to find ways to get the audience's input and buy-in on your global program. Survey your audiences to find out what their every day experience is, as well as what cultural and business differences they perceive between the groups within the organization. If the budget allows, visit other groups to see their operation and their styles of doing business. When you survey other groups, explain what programs you're attempting to implement and ask those groups how they would feel about being included. Not only will

you obtain good information, you'll also begin to bridge the gaps between diverse groups before the training programs roll out.

Finally, be sure to reach out to managers and executives within those culturally and geographically different groups. It's great to have buy-in from the line, but managers will be the ones who enforce and schedule training. Go to the management groups with the same surveys and the same desire to explore their perceptions about a global training program. As you move through an information-gathering phase regarding your audience, you'll find that you'll be more ready to move on to the next step, the analysis of how you will reach that global audience with your global program.

Reaching Your Audiences

You've analyzed your audience but the fact remains that you must determine how you'll reach that audience. In other words, how are you going to deliver a globally diverse program to a global audience? Before you can move on to content development, you should have a good idea of how you'll roll the training program to your audiences. Let's discuss some important aspects of this step.

First, revisit your audience analysis to gather information about their current situation. What are their facilities like? Are you dealing with a factory, an office, or a combination of both? Or are you dealing with individuals spread throughout a geographic location? When you analyzed the audiences, you probably also discovered what their jobs are like. Remember that workers in different countries especially work under different condition and with different rules. Are there strict schedules that training will have to work around? Will you be

dealing with unions, overtime pay, or other potential situations that need resolution before the training reaches the audience?

With all of this in mind, determine what training delivery methods currently exist for the groups within your audience. If the organization has recently expanded, your new audiences may not yet have access to current training methods. If this is the case, find out what timeline you're dealing with in order to get those groups on board. If training methods are going to expand, you may end up with a full range of tools at your disposal. This will be good to know as you develop content and begin to roll it out. Also keep in mind, again, the cultural differences between groups at this point. Some groups may not be used to technology at all, while some may be further advanced than you are. On the other hand, some groups may be used to a classroom-based curriculum and nothing more. The opportunities to expand and share training delivery methods are great when you're looking at a global program, so be sure to do an effective analysis of what is currently going on.

Next, consider technology in order to bridge gaps and make training effective between geographically spread audiences. Web based training is always useful and can be accessed virtually anywhere. For live interactions, consider the use of video streaming or even online meeting technologies such as Web-X or GoTo Meeting. These interventions can be quite effective for both technical and non-technical training - and they can encourage a great level of interaction between cultures. As technology use increases, think about creating video and simulations that can be accessed and downloaded to associates' computers, i-Pods, and home desktops. This global reach will underpin the content and will, again, create a

new understanding of the global organization.

In relation to technology, consider the overall delivery method, that is, is the organization using a learning management system? If not, now would be a good time to begin looking at a system that can deliver training, record attendance, and serve as a repository for all of the organization's groups. If you are currently using an LMS, be sure to verify it has the capability to add users - and that the organization itself can effectively add users to the system as the training program expands.

On the opposite side of technology, will any of the training require a classroom or personal interaction? If so, think about how this can be accomplished as the program rolls out in a global fashion. Travel is expensive and training budgets are most likely squeezed at this time. With that in mind, look at existing training and management staffs, as well as facilities, within the audiences you'd like to reach. If training facilities and staffs exist, create a plan to have those staffs trained on the new programs. If not, determine if existing staff can be used as facilitators on a temporary, or even permanent, basis.

Whatever methods you decide to use, you must remember to again get buy-in from management and audiences alike. If these groups are on board with your methods, you should be able to proceed to content development fairly quickly. Plus, getting people involved in the planning stages will get them excited about the prospect of a global program. Next, we will move on to content development.

Content Development

In the development of a globally diverse training program, the most important step is probably the development of content. You must ensure that the content can "speak" to audiences who vary in culture, countries, business processes, and every day life. There are many ways to ensure that your content is global, so let's take a look at ways to create that kind of content.

The key to keep in mind when you begin content development, regardless of the subject matter, is to create content that has a global "feel". Consider again your audience and their respective cultures. Today, many business people in many different countries speak English - and do business in English. But you must remember to keep any regional or "American" slang out of content. Take some time to do research on words, phrases, and ways of doing business in the regions where your audiences are located. Also discover how gender is or is not used in training materials. As a general rule, names should be "neuter" in gender and fairly neutral in use. In relation to culture and business, be aware of situations that may arise in other cultures that may not come about in your own.

Revisiting language, it's important to determine if your content will have to be translated. If so, content must be absolutely free of unclear phrases or colloquial language use. You'll find that translation into and out of English can take a long time, as the nuances of other languages do not necessarily translate from English. If translations are going to be necessary, be sure to consider this when you are creating your development timeline.

When you're looking at the actual content, be sure to use examples and scenarios that "touch" all of the audiences for whom you're developing. For example, a business interaction in India may have different nuances and connotations in the U.S., but this is no reason to leave this content out. In other words, learning can occur on two different planes: the technical, and the cultural. This global diversity should be the hallmark of your training program. But do not assume that every scenario or example will "translate" from one culture to another. In this regard, create content that is "compartmentalized", that is, content that can have scenarios, examples, and problems interchanged readily to match the cultural and business nuances of the audience. This compartmentalization will allow you to make changes but also keep the overall "shape" of the program.

In relation to compartmentalization, be sure to utilize content that is general where appropriate and specific where appropriate. General content is more likely to remain if you need to compartmentalize your scenarios and examples in relation to the audience. For that reason, keep general content in the global "feel" that you're trying to achieve. The more specific content, then, can be the pieces that are interchangeable based on the culture or region you're dealing with.

Before content development begins, consider who will be writing and producing the content. If the organization has been accustomed to content coming from one area, consider involving content developers from the locations where content is going to be targeted. By bringing in developers and subject matter experts from across the various audiences, you'll be able to ensure that overall global "feel"

and also that nuances between cultures are not missed. When content is ready, be sure to have it reviewed across the audiences, as well. Anytime new content is rolled out, an objective review will help you identify issues. But this is especially necessary when you're dealing with content that crosses cultures. Additionally, the inclusion of other subject matter experts and content developers will help create the buy-in you need to continue the program successfully.

The content you develop can make or break a globally diverse program. If the content is too narrow, or focuses on regional nuance and terminology, then it will not get the message across. On the other hand, content that is compartmentalized, easily interchangeable, and that "speaks" to all of your audiences will make the rollout of the program much easier. The next step is to consider your marketing.

Marketing

If you've taken the time to create content with global appeal, then your marketing can make or break your globally diverse training program. Just as developing content for a globally diverse training program can be tricky, so can marketing. Each region, each audience can require subtle or major changes in marketing and message when it comes to a training program. How can you effectively market a globally diverse training program?

Before you design your marketing message, think about how marketing in general varies between cultures, regions, and countries. Take some time to do research on advertising and marketing in your audience's home countries and regions. And then consider how effective branding works across cultures. Think about Coca-Cola, FedEx, and Apple. All have

recognizable brands no matter what country you're in. You should model your marketing for the training program in this manner. How can you brand the training program, or for that matter the training department, so that it will be recognizable to everyone in the organization? If you manage your marketing on this scale, you'll find that it will be effective.

But before you send out your message, think about what methods you'll use to do that. One of the best ways to start brainstorming about marketing methods is to revisit the training delivery methods that are or will be available. Consider tailoring marketing to go with these delivery methods. For example, if the training program is going to be primarily web-based, create marketing in the form of emails, tutorials, and short videos. If the program is a combination of technical and paper-based delivery methods, consider mixing your marketing. If the organization is already utilizing a learning management system, take the time to create marketing that can be delivered via that medium. On the other hand, if the organization plans to roll an LMS with the global program, consider "easing" audiences into the use of the LMS through your marketing.

When it comes to the marketing message, shift your focus to benefits, as you would with any type of advertising. The trick is to determine how each audience will benefit. For example, if you are rolling training to a global audience that has been somewhat separate from the "heart" of the organization because of culture or geographic location, consider a message that emphasizes how training will bring the groups together. If your program is going for a consolidation of processes and methods, use this as the focus for your marketing, that is, tell each audience that the training program will

put everyone on the same footing. And don't forget to include overall, general benefits, such as learning how other cultures and regions do business. When you market with this perspective, you will be able to emphasize the global reach of your program.

Another powerful marketing tool, which is especially useful with diverse groups, are testimonials. In order to get a particular audience to "advertise" the globally diverse training program, it will probably be necessary to roll the program to small audiences before the general rollout. For example, if you're rolling a program to all groups in a particular country, select an audience from that country and deliver the training program to them. When they have had the opportunity to see it, evaluate it, and benefit from it, collect testimonials from that audience to use as "advertising". This marketing method will enable you to get the buy-in of other diverse groups.

Another group you can depend on for testimonials and marketing assistance are the people from whom you've already obtained buy-in: the content developers, the stakeholders, and the subject matter experts. Use this group not only to solicit marketing ideas for their respective cultural and business groups, but also as advertisers themselves. When an audience has been removed from the organization, they will respond readily to people they already trust.

When you are planning marketing for a globally diverse training program, the key is obviously global appeal. This appeal has to communicate the benefits of the program to various groups as well as communicate a readily recognizable brand. Place time and emphasis with marketing

a globally diverse training program and you'll be sure to gain the trust of all audiences you intend to touch. Next, it's time to plan the roll out of training.

The Roll Out

One of the best problems training and development organizations can have is a line of program attendees. If you've managed your marketing on a global scale, you will have to plan an effective rollout that maintains the global "feel" you've been successful at creating. Let's look at how to roll training to a global group.

During content development, you analyzed current staffs and facilities. For the rollout, take another look at this important bit of information. Do the audiences already have training staffs they recognize and trust? Or do the audiences respond readily to managers or mentors when it comes to training? These groups are going to be key to your rollout; the audiences will respond well if the faces they know and trust are involved in teaching, mediating, and mentoring the new program. Examine the staffs that exist to determine who will work well as classroom instructors, who can transition into the roles of online mediators, who can manage the program at the local site, and who can become mentors or coaches once the program rolls out. If there is no existing training staff, or if managers and supervisors do not conduct training, you'll have to do additional research. Find out which members of the audiences could transition into training roles. The key when looking at staffs is to remember that a "head office" staff can only do so much - and that culturally diverse audiences will more readily respond to people they already know. This is not to say that you can't

go to the sites and conduct "train the trainer" sessions; it is just a reminder that at some point you'll have to let the globally diverse program go under its own steam in its own regions.

Once you've selected instructors, training managers, mediators, and mentors, try to bring them together more than once. Whether it's an in-person seminar or a video conference, the idea is to create a team feel amongst the groups that are going to roll the training out. They can rely on each other to address issues, especially if this group is geographically diverse. When you plan these meetings of the training teams, create time for them to meet before, during, and after the initial rollout. Let them discuss what went well, what works, and what does not. You'll find that with some gentle "prodding", a globally diverse training team can do quite a bit to make a globally diverse training program succeed.

Staffs are important, but facilities take on extra importance when they are spread out geographically. For this reason, it is necessary to know what kinds of facilities you are dealing with. Remember that training and office facilities differ from region to region, as do expectations about their use and condition. If you've located the training staffs, have them photograph facilities if you cannot visit them in person. This way, you'll have a good idea of what facilities exist and if any upgrades need to be made. If you find that there are no facilities or that it will not be cost effective to upgrade, try to find a way to outsource. Use hotels, conference centers, and other office spaces to create a space for training. On the other hand, don't forget to test virtual and technical facilities, as well. For example, if your global training program will roll primarily as a web based application, test the organization's

bandwidth before the training actually rolls out. You don't want to end up with a collapsed system on the first day training courses are offered. Plus, remember that usage will be heavier when the program starts and will begin to even out as the program continues. After your test, you should feel confident that the systems will support the program.

When you schedule the overall rollout, be mindful of business processes and work schedules as you schedule. Remember that changes in times and date are inevitable, both because of scheduling problems and because of the changes in time zones and days as your audiences spread out. And as you schedule, remember to use the same personnel who will be conducting and managing the program as communicators. Again, your audiences will respond readily to these groups and will be able to communicate their concerns about the schedule directly to their instructors, training staffs, and managers. Above all else, be ready for any contingency when you are operating training on a global scale. Changes in technology availability, electricity, governments, and work forces occur on a regular basis throughout the world, so you should be ready for these issues.

Once you've rolled out your program, the next step is to evaluate it.

Global Evaluation

If your globally diverse training program has rolled out successfully, you'll probably have plenty of attendees with opinions about the program and its content. Be sure to take a snapshot of this information and use it going forward. In some ways, such as evaluation

levels, your evaluation will be exactly what you've been accustomed to. But in other ways, such as delivery and data gathering, an evaluation of a global program will be completely different. Let's step through evaluation.

First, when you developed content you probably began to formulate an idea of how the programs would be evaluated. But before you begin evaluation, revisit this idea to determine what methods and levels of evaluation will work best. Level One evaluation, so called "smile sheets", are usually a good idea in any training program. This evaluation will give you a good idea of how the program was perceived immediately. Attendees will certainly have opinions as soon as their program has ended, and those opinions may harden (or soften) over time. But a Level One is a good snapshot. Higher-level evaluations, that is, those evaluations that measure behavioral change, are also good ideas. Just as you would with any training program, use your content objectives to structure evaluations for participants that measure how they have used the material - and how they have changed the way they perform tasks or processes. Along those lines, measure manager and supervisor perceptions of the employees, in both specific and general terms.

The differences in evaluation, though, begin with how evaluations will be delivered. Your training program is globally diverse, as is your audience. For this reason, it may be a good idea to take the evaluation content to a personal level. Try holding focus groups, both in person and virtually, with the survey audiences. You may not necessarily have to attend in person, but have the people who developed and delivered the training go to focus groups. Virtual meetings, via video or telephone

conferencing, can also give you a good idea of how the training went. In fact, in today's technological age, people in varying cultures may respond very well to "in person" feedback if it can be given from the "safety" of their own offices or locations. If your program was delivered virtually, make use of virtual evaluation, as well. If you are using a learning management system, these online evals are fairly easy to create, distribute, and tabulate, especially to an audience that may be geographically diverse.

But here is where we come to another difference in evaluation on a global scale. Consider language barriers, even if training was developed and delivered in English. Evaluations, even those that are virtual, in-person, or paper based, may need to be delivered in the local languages. This way, certain nuances of the language and the participant's perceptions of the training can be well-measured. Be sure to get local training staffs on board with translating evaluations - this could be a heavy workload in the beginning of a training program. But if you go this route, you'll be sure to get your point across - and participants will be able to accurately express their feelings and perceptions, as well.

The key in global evaluation, just as in any other evaluation, is to truly use the data. Resist the temptation to let it sit in a file drawer. With a global program, though, you should pay close attention to how the cultural and local pieces of training were perceived. You'll need to make the determination that language use was appropriate and efficient, as well as if scenarios and examples were appropriate to the audiences. Even the choice of language, whether in English or local languages, should be part of the evaluation. You'll want to analyze

participant responses to see if anyone was offended or confused by language use. Great content is always appreciated but if it is lost in translation it becomes useless.

Once you have a good picture of the evaluation results, use the data to make changes. Cycle back to content development and use the same people and methods to make changes. Be straightforward about your evaluation results, especially if you've discovered inappropriate use of language, examples, or scenarios. Your content development staff will appreciate the constructive criticism and will use it to make effective changes going forward. The last step in creating a globally diverse training program is to keep the program within its global "feel".

Keep It Global

All of your organization's training programs must be kept up to date and fresh. This is a given, but a globally diverse training program will require more analysis, more research, and more attention. With a global program, you're not just managing multiple sites and content versions, but you're also managing diverse staffs in diverse cultures, regions, and countries. In order to manage all of this, you must become an organizational "state department" that maintains a "pulse" on all of its audiences. Let's find out how.

As you evaluate your program, look first at delivery methods. Has the audience grown to a level of sophistication that makes your delivery method antiquated? Has new technology been introduced to a region or culture that wasn't there when you rolled out the program? On the other hand, have changes in a country or region made certain technologies more difficult to manage? Be sure to stay in contact with local

training staffs, as well as line and management employees, to ensure that training methods are keeping up with the times. A simple phone conversation every couple of months will keep you aware, but keep in mind that if certain regions or countries become "hot spots" you'll need to increase the frequency of your contact.

Next, look at the organization itself. Has the diversity of the organization changed since you rolled out the training program? Has the organization expanded into new areas that require different cultural or regional nuances in training content? Or has the program truly created a global network that can be managed on a global scale? Consider what new operations or business centers have been added since the training rolled out. Keep in mind that new operations within the same country or region may require a "cultural check", that is, some research that would help you determine if the global training program should continue "as is" or if it should be slightly modified. As always, keep in mind how you can make modifications to training in a way that will make the program easily adaptable.

From the organization's perspective, are changes coming in the structure or distribution of the organization? Are there plans to expand or restrict operations in any of the areas your training organization serves? Check in with stakeholders both in the home region and throughout the entire organization to determine if changes are coming - and be prepared to make them. When you think of changes, in other words, think of not only changes to process but to culture and organizational reach, as well.

On a bigger scale, take a look at each region or country in which training exists. Have changes occurred in business processes, governments, or regulations that would necessitate changes in the training program or content? Have any of your areas moved into global "hot spots" that may require a temporary halt to training, or even a temporary increase in frequency of training delivery? Look at the people in each region or culture, as well. Have they been given more (or less) individual freedom than they had before? Have governments taken over information or technology in a way that would change your training programs? Has the culture in which training is located adapted different views toward the organization's home country and people? You should ask all of these questions at regular intervals in order to keep the program on its global footing.

There are seven steps to creating and maintaining a globally diverse training program. It's a good idea to revisit each step any time you move forward, and also any time you want to make changes. First, examine and analyze your audience. Second, consider how you are reaching the audience. Third, create and maintain content that has a "global feel". Fourth, create a marketing plan that impacts your global audience. Fifth, manage training rollouts and scheduling with your global audience and cultures in mind. Sixth, keep in mind that evaluation of training is different in a global framework, so pay close attention to those differences when making changes to the program. Finally, as we've just discussed, keep your program global.

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