Virtual College

Our Guide to E-learning

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the L&D industry saw a massive rise in the uptake of e-learning, and it is easy to see why. It not only saves costs and time for businesses, but it is the perfect tool for learners who are 'self-directed' and are eager for a flexible approach. An approach that allows them to work at their own pace, wherever they want. That allows them to fit training in between tasks, complete it whilst travelling, or even take it home.

We know that e-learning hasn't always had this reputation. In fact, it used to be called 'boring', 'pointless' and 'a box-ticking exercise'. But with the rise of different technologies which it can draw from, e-learning has been redefined as interactive and engaging. It can put the learner first by addressing different learning styles and making sure the learning is fun, yet meaningful and beneficial. Using a wide variety of techniques, it can drill in the knowledge and ensure that the learners retain it.

We're thrilled that the world is now starting to see the power e-learning can hold. That is something we've always believed, as we know – and have known for over 25 years now – that with the right approach, creativity and skills, e-learning has the power to drive change.

Here's how we create learning that drives change.

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It's all about the learners. It can't be any other way. To make learning that drives change, the learners need to be at the heart of it. Here is our creative journey to ensure this is the case.

1. **We work with experts.** We work closely with subject matter experts (SMEs) who produce relevant, up-to-date and factually correct content. Our instructional designers – the ones who build the training – then break the content down, understand it, and get to the heart of it, all whilst considering the best approach for the learner.

2. **We create authorboards, storyboards and numerous drafts.** It is important we get the content right, which is why we go through many draft stages, allowing the SMEs several opportunities to review, check and approve our interpretation.

3. **Our designers get involved.** Our designers choose a suitable design, whether that is photos, graphics, or animations, ensuring that it matches the topic and tone of the course. This helps create an engaging and relatable course.

4. **Bringing the courses to life.** Our team make sure to choose the right medium for the courses. Is video required? Or a PDF? Maybe a talking head to bring a story to life? Have our scenarios reflected real life examples? We consider all these questions, all our options, to make sure the course is the right fit for the topic and the learners.

5. **We are all about the quality.** We are sticklers for high standards, which is why we have numerous functionality checks and proofreads throughout to make sure the training works and reads seamlessly.
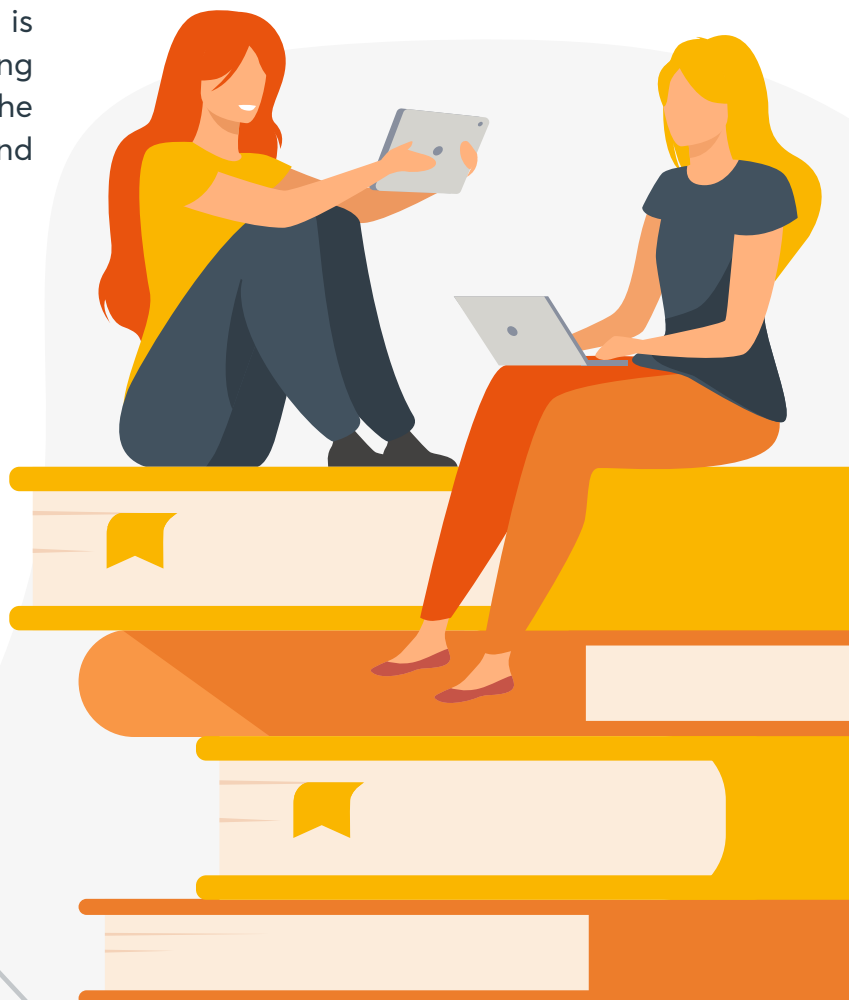
How we make it unique for customers

When creating bespoke training for customers, we follow the same creative journey but with a few twists. Here's how we keep them at the forefront.

It's all about the customer. We're famous for the relationships we build with the customers. We go to great lengths to understand them and their requirements, fears and challenges inside out, and involve them every step of the way.

We take them through the discovery phase. Our discovery phase consists of workshops, meetings or focus groups, where we make sure to collate all the information we need to start mapping out a plan for the solution.

We use human centred learning design. This means we get to know the learners. To deliver learning that is human, authentic and relevant, we have to. So, we consider their thoughts, emotions and abilities in order to create a learning experience that truly makes a difference.

The designers design for the customer. Working carefully to ensure the training is appropriate to the customer, our designers create bespoke graphic designs ensuring that it matches their requirements and brand.

We have dedicated project managers. As there are so many people and stages involved, each project has a project manager who ensures that deadlines are met, queries are answered and resolved, and that, overall, the project runs smoothly.

We're flexible. In the end, it's never about us and our needs, it's about the customer and their needs. This means that we adapt to their preferred way of working, we don't try and shoehorn them into ours.
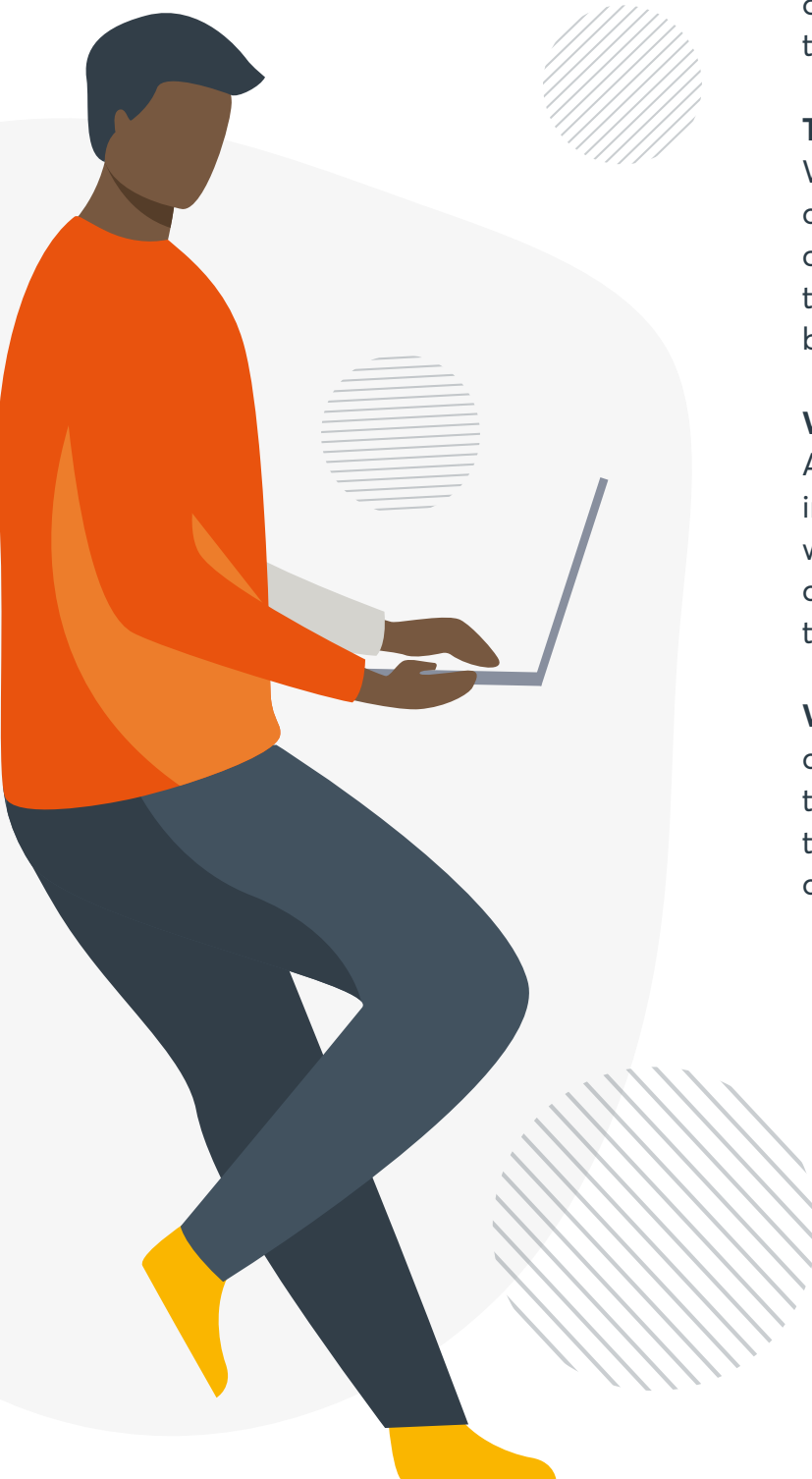
How we've overcome e-learning challenges

As with any training method, e-learning has its challenges. But we don't shy away from these, instead we acknowledge them, learn from them and use them to ensure our products are the best they can be.

Here are some of the challenges we've come up against and how we've overcome them.

The delivery method is monotonous

We know lots of e-learning solutions are thought of as 'glorified PowerPoints' with all the learning presented in one style. To combat this, we make sure that the training offers a range of elements – bespoke graphics, videos, guides or infographics – whatever is needed to support and enhance the topic, so the learner truly gains what they need from it.
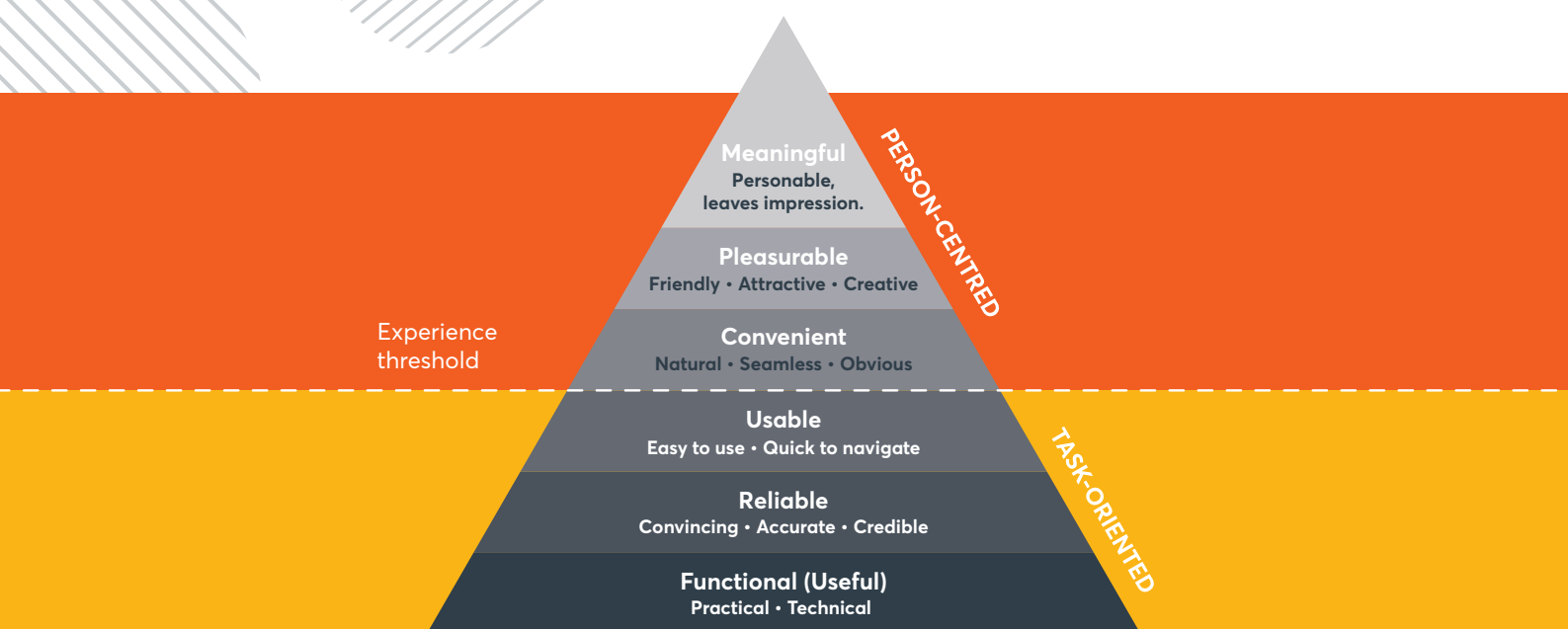
We also develop training for customers who require a blended approach, whether that is creating digital resources to support to face-to-face training, or a piece that can be used in a classroom. It doesn't have to be 'either or' anymore.

The learners don't relate to the content

Learners are often turned off training as they cannot relate. This is where human-centred learning design and the discovery phase are so powerful. They give us the insights we need to ensure that the content, whether that is activities, case studies and scenarios, is relatable to the learner.

The learning is unengaging and boring

This is where training often misses the mark. If you consider the user experience hierarchy of needs, you will see that e-learning hits the mark for the first four, but is it pleasurable and meaningful? These are hard to achieve, but by using human-centred learning design and striving to make the learning a memorable experience, it will become a more pleasurable and meaningful piece of training.

Experience threshold

PERSON-CENTRED

Meaningful
Personable, leaves impression.

Pleasurable
Friendly · Attractive · Creative

Convenient
Natural · Seamless · Obvious

Usable
Easy to use · Quick to navigate

Reliable
Convincing · Accurate · Credible

Functional (Useful)
Practical · Technical

TASK-ORIENTED

The user experience hierarchy of needs

Why our products can be trusted

We put the learner first. It should be clear that this is our top priority. All training has the aim to teach a learner something, whether that is a concept, a practical skill, a process – the requirements are endless. But unless you really consider how they learn, think and what their requirements are, then that concept, skill or process is not going to sink in.

We strive to improve all the time. We are constantly adapting to new needs, desires and technologies. As we've explained, we recognise the challenges that e-learning can present and work to overcome them. So, you can expect a course which will be cutting edge and the best it can be – because this is what we aim for.

We use subject matter experts. We've created courses from fire safety to safeguarding, and drilling oil to defence technologies – and we hold our hands up, we're not subject matter experts for all these industries. But we do know the experts and we employ their expertise and understanding to ensure that the courses are factually correct, up to date, and cover the relevant information.

We use learning methodologies. Numerous academics have explored how people learn, the different levels of learning, and the best methods to use to ensure knowledge retention. This has culminated in research such as Bloom's taxonomy and Mayer's cognitive theory of multimedia learning. We take this research seriously and make sure we apply it appropriately when building our training solutions.

We can adapt. We understand that companies have different needs, different requirements and pride ourselves on being able to adapt to these and continue to learn and develop. Do you require a course to be translated and developed in numerous different languages? We can do that. Ensure the courses are accessible? Doesn't faze us. We don't believe one size fits all and would never recommend a solution that we didn't believe was right.

We care. Ultimately, we care about you and your organisation. We care about learners. We care about quality.

Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning

This principle, known as the 'multimedia principle', states that people learn more deeply from words and pictures than from words alone.

AUDITORY

VISUAL

Words
Pictures

Ears
Eyes

selecting words

selecting images

Sound
Images

organising words

organising images

Verbal mode

Pictoral mode

integrating

Prior knowledge

SENSORY MEMORY

WORKING MEMORY

LONG-TERM MEMORY

Who are Virtual College?

At Virtual College we live and breathe digital learning. From our ready-to-go digital training catalogue through to large-scale customised training programmes, all of our high-quality learning experiences are underpinned by first class learning technology.

As part of Netex Learning, we have an experienced team of over 250 employees globally and lean on more than three decades of expertise to build training programmes that help you meet your learning objectives.

If you want to find out more about our services, please contact us.

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