Dynamic education for tomorrow's IT

Based on global research by Vanson Bourne and Positive Marketing

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Education is set to become a deciding factor in an organization's success. But tomorrow's IT leaders will only succeed by offering flexible and customizable education to software users. We explore the key factors that are affecting software education today, and look at what this means for the future.

About this research

This white paper details findings from surveys of 1,000 senior IT decision makers, conducted in 2010 and 2013. It was undertaken by research firm Vanson Bourne across 13 countries in Asia Pacific, Europe, and continental America on behalf of HP Software. The research methodology was a combination of online and telephone interviews, in local language where required. Respondents were only informed of the sponsor's identity after completing the survey to avoid prejudicing responses.

Introduction

In 2010, a Vanson Bourne survey of 1,000 IT decision makers documented the software best practices of companies throughout the world. This original report revealed several key areas of focus for IT leaders, including the standardization of IT processes, improving user adoption through IT education, and staying up-to-date with increasing software upgrades. In 2013 we went back to a similar group to see how the landscape has changed, and why this affects how we educate tomorrow's IT-enabled highly-mobile workforce.

So what has changed since 2010?
Today, users have even greater expectations of IT. The reason? We are all interacting with intuitively-designed interfaces every day - on our smart phones, tablets, and TVs. We expect things to be instantly accessible and available everywhere, 24/7. We expect the same positive experience every time we touch an app, website, or program. As consumers, we are ruthless in abandoning technology that does not live up to expectations. This does not change when people get to work.

For organizations, this dynamic poses two intrinsically-linked challenges, one involving adoption of software, the other education. We will return to this in a later section.

Since 2010, the landscape for enterprise IT has seen rapid developments, driven by cloud applications, agile development, and Big Data. Organizations can see the potential, and are investing. This means IT departments are under pressure to deliver against that investment. But with the deluge of new apps, solutions and integrations, IT professionals need to regularly update their skills with education and training. ROI depends on it.

In this paper, we will look back at the findings from 2010 and compare them to today's results. We will dive into industry changes around education and how learners consume education to examine how changing approaches to IT education can set apart the leaders from the followers in this rapidly-evolving world.

Why should I care about education?

Technology is good for business - research shows IT has increased productivity over the last 70 years. This proven success has led to a rise in IT spending, with 69% of respondents expecting an increase in budget in the next year, as businesses chase more productivity with more software.

But increased spend on software alone does not guarantee a parallel increase in ROI.

Gains from new software are dependent on how the business uses it. And this brings us back to the deciding factor – people. The same consumers who have high expectations of technology, and reject anything that doesn't work for them.

Unless you have educated employees, who know how to operate and extract the value from the software you purchased, your IT projects are unlikely to be successful, as the diagram below shows.

How education improves value realization
Many IT professionals openly acknowledge the huge efforts needed in the early stages of IT projects. Installing vast Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems can take, in some cases, decades and involves reskilling entire workforces to deliver value. It is unwise therefore to think today's rapidly-changing IT infrastructures can deliver similar business value without proper consideration of how to educate and motivate our teams to make best use of the latest software.

With innovation a constant, companies need to keep up. Failing to train those who use software will limit productivity. This means education is not an optional extra. It is a vital component in reaping the productivity benefits promised by the software.

Executive summary

This white paper is for those planning to use IT education to gain competitive advantage, who want to be the leaders, who want to adopt best-practice training methods today to solve tomorrow's problems.

The key attribute of tomorrow's IT leaders will be responsiveness to business change. To deliver this, they need to assess how education is working for their organization and implement the improvements required to provide high-quality education to all users and at the speed the business demands. Content needs to be reviewed and adjusted regularly. Those charged with raising IT productivity levels and preventing the underuse of purchased software will need to move software education from being a follower into a more strategic role. This involves anticipating change, laying out flexible roadmaps, and accelerating the delivery of enabled software users.

The future is bright for those who can adapt to the different learning styles, time constraints, and professional needs of tomorrow's workforce. And thanks to technology, education has never been better equipped to deliver at the speed of business.

This paper will explain how the world of learning is changing, what you need to do to become a pioneer of IT education, how to get the most value from your software, and what the future of education looks like.

Getting the most from software you already have

Every software investment is carefully weighed up against the value it can deliver to the business. But ensuring that value is fully realized is a complex task. From our research, it is clear that many organizations still underestimate the effort required to implement new software. Even when software is implemented, there are more barriers to overcome in order to get users to adopt the software. As we all know, people are often resistant to change, unless they can see there is something in it for them, or that it does not require too much effort. And this is where education becomes crucial to your user adoption strategy.

We say "crucial" because our findings show organizations are wasting millions of dollars every year on shelfware – software that is not implemented, unused, or underused. It is not just a problem for IT. This wastage creates inevitable tension between organizational departments as Finance scrutinizes the figures, and Lines of Business get frustrated when promised software improvements fail to materialize. But IT is the only department that can solve this issue, and CIOs are under pressure to act.

In 2010 we found on average a total of 38% of respondents' software fell into these categories. In 2013 this has grown to 41%, with the biggest rise coming in software that was not implemented.

What percentage of the software purchased is not implemented/unused by users/underused?
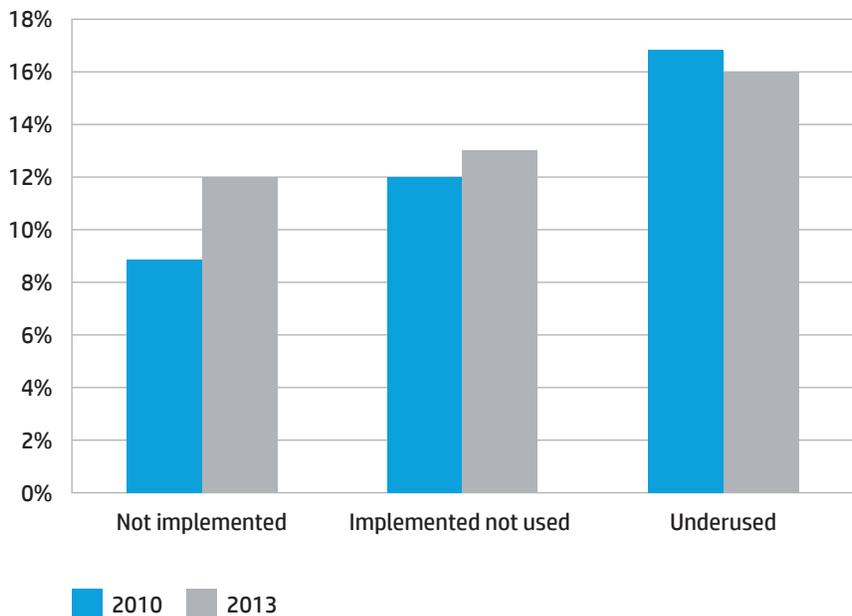
So what strategies can IT management leaders use to tackle this issue and drive down wastage? Answers start to emerge when we look at some of the findings in more detail.

3% rise in software not implemented – The biggest shelfware change uncovered by the survey was in software that was not implemented or not available for use. This may reflect an inability to respond to the rapidly-changing needs of users. Often software implementations get left behind during wider organizational changes – such as mergers or the introduction of new management.

Solution – Education flexible enough to adapt to these inevitable changes. Make education an ongoing enablement process. With the right tools in place, education can reskill your workforce quickly and effectively, helping to support the whole organization.

1% rise in software not used – This is the category of shelfware that upsets the Finance department the most. IT budget has been spent both on purchasing and implementation (typically installing and alerting users) but has delivered no value to the organization. This may indicate a lack of investment in educating users about the new solution. It can also be an execution issue, where someone has underestimated the time or effort needed to ensure user adoption.

Solution – Investment in continuous learning, both pre and post implementation. This ensures individuals and teams are supported in reaching their goals. Certifications may offer an extra incentive.

1% decrease in underused software – Some good news from the research was that software underuse has gone down very slightly. This could be due to closer scrutiny of usage, or down to software being better aligned to the job roles it supports.

Solution – This decrease may signal that companies with a commitment to continuous education are seeing the benefits – specifically increased value realization. For IT managers looking to replicate this decrease in shelfware within their own organization, this approach to education is worth exploring.

Education brings answers

When this survey delved deeper into causes of shelfware, it became clear that education is a powerful way to combat this issue.

46% of survey respondents gave "training issues" as the major cause for shelfware. Meanwhile 26% cited "user resistance". Taken together these statistics indicate that if an organization can educate users properly, it can eliminate over half of the major causes of shelfware, making education one of the best investments for any IT budget.

In terms of combatting user resistance, we noticed a world-wide correlation in the data between the amount spent on training and the levels of user resistance. As we can see below, those regions which spent even fractionally more on education saw a drop in user resistance. This should encourage IT managers to reassess how they educate users and where to invest their budgets.

Region	Those who gave user resistance as number one reason for shelfware	Percentage of IT budget spent on training
Americas	4%	39%
APJ	6%	30%
Europe	13%	23%

Below, we set out some of the key findings which may help your organization lessen training issues and user resistance.

Can you still improve?
Do you have any of the following in your organization?

• Software that is implemented, but underused
• Software that is implemented and unused
• Software that is not implemented

Symptoms include:

• Discovering additional budget at the end of the year or during a license audit
• Fewer support calls than expected on a specific software package
• The business questioning the value of your software

Suggested remedies:

• Setting a clear roadmap of education for both pre and post implementation
• Getting and maintaining end user buy-in to new software
• Use education to explain the value and the functionality of software

Changing the way we learn

Today, no two learners are the same.

In recent years the rising popularity of smartphones and tablets has made nearly everyone an end user of technology. With the number of mobile application downloads expected to reach 98 billion by 2015[1], more and more of us are being exposed to highly-intuitive applications in both our personal and professional lives. But not everyone has embraced this change equally.

In some cases this has opened up a generational gap in experience, meaning education now needs to cater for people who started their careers on either side of the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) revolution of the last few years.

As a consequence, education has to factor in users with many different levels of knowledge. On top of this, people have individual learning styles, making them more responsive to one type of training over another.

To be effective, education now needs to appeal to different types of learners, across four main categories:

Type of learner	Preferred training methods
Visual	Face-to-face, learning by watching, VILT
Auditory	Face-to-face, VILT
Reading-writing	Self-paced web, electronic performance support
Tactile	Learning by doing, electronic performance support, VILT

In the 2010 survey, face-to-face training, favored by auditory and visual learners, was by far the most popular learning method. Three years later, things have changed. The more cost-effective electronic styles of learning, such as Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT) and self-paced web training, are gaining popularity as mobile changes the preferences of users. While face-to-face is still the most popular, all types of training are now highly valued.

It is clear that IT managers need to offer a broad range of education methods if they wish to capture all users.

How we like to learn
The percentage of respondents that gave a 5 star rating for the following methods of training:

• Face-to-face onsite – 42%

• "Learning by doing" style of learning – 37%

• Face-to-face offsite – 35%

• Online "on-the-job" training (electronic performance support) – 32%

• "Learning by watching" style of learning – 31%

• Self-paced web training – 30%

• Virtual Instructor Led Training – 30%

[1] "The Mobile Application Market,"
 – Oct. 2011, Berg Insight.

Customizable, flexible and continuous

It is clear that for software education to be effective, learners must have choice. This means organizations have to use different delivery methods to convey the same core learnings and then benchmark results across every learning style at speed and scale.

To achieve this you need a continuous learning education solution that enables highly customized training to be delivered to individual employees. Our research shows that IT managers recognize the importance of this.

When asked the question "in what timeframe will it be critical to customize IT training in order for it to become effective" – 46% of respondents said it was critical today. In total, 95% said it will be critical between now and the next five years. Proof that IT professionals believe customizable training is vital in order to deliver what their organization needs.

In what timeframe will it be critical to customize IT training in order for it to be effective?

- Today
- Inside 2 years
- 3-5 years
- Not within the next 5 years
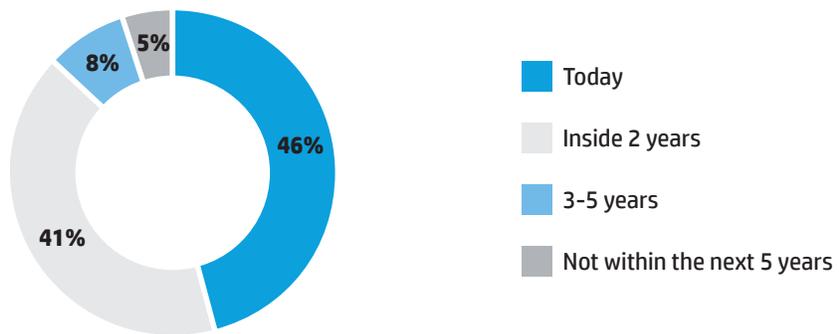
On top of customized training and education materials, respondents also saw the value in offering a flexible, on-demand delivery of IT education. Not only does on-demand education save time, it can combat user resistance and reduce costs. The majority of respondents highlighted five key benefits from this approach:

• Faster on-boarding of end users
• Faster knowledge transfer
• Improved end-user satisfaction
• Faster speed to train end-users on new software
• Reduced cost for document management or maintenances

The key message - education needs to evolve from being simply a "point-in-time" exercise to a continuous process that regularly touches end users. This will help tomorrow's IT leaders counteract the impact of wider business changes such as employee churn, mergers and acquisitions, and knowledge siloes. By maintaining high levels of software adoption, education can in fact enhance agility rather than lag behind corporate changes.

The future of education

So what can we do to ensure we answer tomorrow's education questions today? How do we move beyond following best practice to become a leader in education? Here is what we learnt from the research:

A new generation of users
These users will have been exposed to technology all of their lives. They will expect anything they use to work flawlessly, be available anytime, anywhere, and be customizable to suit their needs.

More software updates
As users become increasingly demanding, the software they use will also have to rapidly evolve. This will mean a rise in the frequency of software updates and therefore a need to ensure education content creation is a continuous process, alerting users every time it is updated.

Career changes
Education will need to support the movement of employees into the business and between departments to ensure they are capable of retraining for new roles and transferring knowledge fluidly and efficiently.

Ever more complex
With users now requiring customizable and flexible education, the management of these processes becomes increasingly complex. Consult professionals about best practice – they can bring valuable knowledge, experience, and proven processes to your organization. A single repository with a sophisticated workflow means technology solves, rather than adds to, the complexity.

Strategic planning
The research revealed a trend towards setting training plans closer to when budgets are set – 25% of respondents agree training plans before budgets are set, 43% shortly after, and 24% one month after. We are clearly becoming more strategic and forward-looking, focusing on how to invest over the course of a year rather than in a rush at Year End.

Clearly education needs to respond to all of these changes. More than ever, managers need to understand who they are teaching and how they like to learn. They have to ensure knowledge is able to flow within an organization and does not get trapped with just a few subject matter experts – a risk for the business if they leave. These experts may need to help with structuring their knowledge into the format best suited to their organization. With so many challenges to address, you may be wondering where to start. But help is at hand from HP Software Education Services.

Best practice from HP

Customers of HP Software Education Services benefit from expert support, decades of experience, tried-and-tested approaches, and the latest cloud-based education solutions. Feedback from HP customers proves that they see the value in training and education, more so than other consumers of IT education.

	HP customers	Non-HP customers
Average value seen from all training methods	77%	67%

Here are three "top training and education planning tips" from the HP Software Education team:

Don't delay, plan today – Don't let the calendar rule your training plans. Build the plan around each project and consider the lifecycle of the solution.

Tailor to your audience – Offer customized education that accommodates the various ways that employees learn. Develop a blend of classroom courses, short online modules, and on-the-job training to meet ongoing learning and performance support needs.

Work with an education mentor – You don't have to be an education expert to put together an expert education plan. Your software vendor has professionals who help customers do this every day – let them help you too.

Conclusion

Since 2010, IT professionals' training preferences have changed. We now expect IT education to be delivered in ways that suit us, when it suits us. While shelfware has increased slightly, education can combat this by removing user resistance and helping education become user-friendly, and therefore effective.

Offering users a variety of education delivery methods is essential. Empower them to create their own education roadmap, influence their own content, and pace their own learning, and you will see results. Managers need to become more flexible in their planning, and embrace on-demand training so users can learn at a pace which is comfortable for them and matches the agility which IT is supposed to deliver to the business.

The next generation of sophisticated users is already having a huge impact on education – so don't delay in consulting an education professional on how you can future-proof your organization's approach to IT education. It's time to share the power and give individuals the choice to select how and when they learn, with flexible, customizable, and continuous education.

Do this and you will see the results.

Learn more at
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