

WHITE PAPER

Seven Ways Off-the-Shelf Content **Brings Value to Your Organization**



Whether designing a new training program or simply searching for the right eLearning tools for your existing program, quality content is the first priority. But it is not the only one.

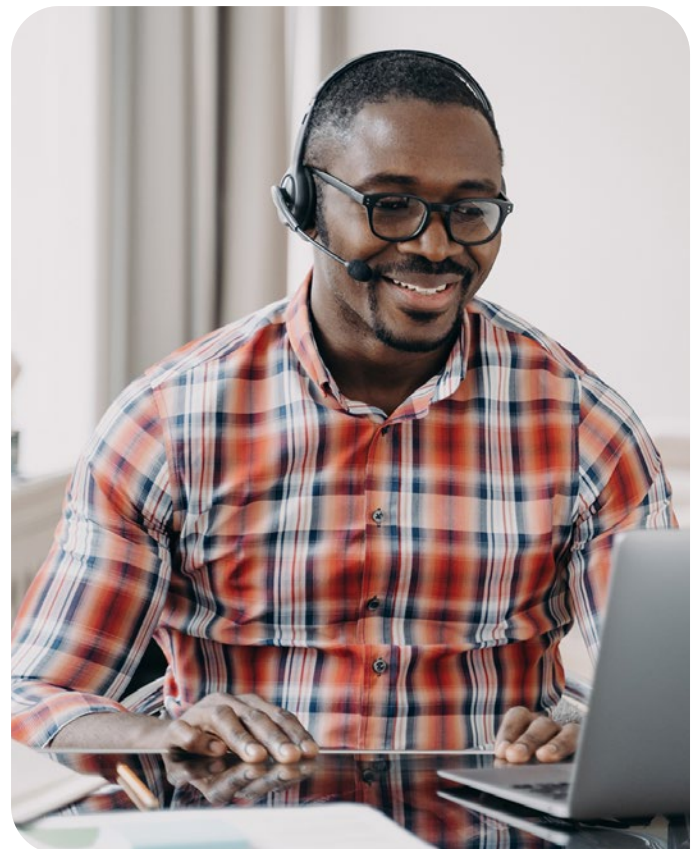
Today, more than ever, forward-thinking organizations are coming to realize that effective training is so much more than creating some content and hoping it “sticks.”

Learning organizations are being stretched thinner and thinner, having to do more with less. With so many important tasks to monitor and complete, there’s a danger the quality of instruction can suffer. **Those that succeed are the ones which find sound ways to free their bandwidth, allowing them to focus on tasks where their specific expertise is truly needed.**

This makes the use of “off-the-shelf” (OTS) content that is much more important. OTS content can allow a team to immediately deploy necessary training quickly and professionally, expanding its offerings without expanding head count (or overtaxing current resources). This is especially the case for smaller teams that need to focus on core tasks and might not be able to keep up with best practices in instructional design or recent developments in content areas (for example, keeping up with compliance laws for an anti-harassment course).

Learning and development teams have a large number of responsibilities, but limited time and resources to complete them. Content creation is only one of the L&D team’s responsibilities. However, content creation is also the most time-intensive task and requires the greatest range of talent.

Using off-the-shelf content is an established, credible way to get up-to-date, professional learning materials, freeing your internal teams to focus on other projects. Understanding the value OTS content brings to the table, as well as its limitations, can help you think strategically about your training programs.



Typical Job Responsibilities of a Training and Development Specialist

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a training and development specialists' job responsibilities include:

- assessing training needs through surveys, consultations, and interviews with managers and employees
- designing and producing training manuals, online learning modules, and course materials
- reviewing training materials from a variety of sources and choose appropriate content
- delivering training to employees using a variety of instructional design techniques
- assisting in the evaluation of training programs
- performing administrative tasks such as monitoring costs, scheduling classes, setting up systems and equipment, and coordinating enrollment

We would also add to this list of duties such as monitoring new compliance regulations and training requirements, keeping up with existing employee training renewals, and demonstrating the value of training to the C-suite. This makes nine general duties, each of which involves its own set of responsibilities. Notice that content creation is only one of these responsibilities!



So... Why Aren't More Companies Using OTS Content?

Having talked to many L&D experts, we've heard three main reasons:

1. In-house teams, it's argued, know the company and the business best, and so are better positioned to create content.
2. Some people worry about the quality of content offerings available.
3. In many cases, the internal team might appreciate the need for OTS content but has been unable to prove its value to decision makers.

A classic study of chief learning officers (CLOs) **found that 31% listed “communicating and measuring value” as their #1 challenge.** As one CLO stated, “My biggest challenge is convincing senior executives of the strategic value of learning.” **The second-biggest challenge? Resource constraints (28%).**

Each of these is a legitimate worry, but each can be addressed by appreciating both the value OTS brings to the table and the various ways it can be deployed in a successful training program. Finding quality OTS content from a reputable, full-service provider lets your internal L&D team focus on areas that require their expertise, resulting in more effective training.

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Seven Ways OTS Content Brings Value to Your Organization

Aside from saving time, there are a number of advantages to using OTS content, especially when it is well integrated into an organized training program. **Understanding the value such content can bring will help learning organizations get leadership buy-in, make wiser purchase decisions, and better integrate that content into their overall learning ecosystem.**

Working closely with our own clients in implementing off-the-shelf content, we identified seven key areas of value.

1. Optimizing Resources for Cost Efficiency
2. Speed to Immediate Use
3. Range of Topics and Subject Matter Expertise
4. Leveraging Best Practices in Adult Learning
5. Compliance and Risk Mitigation
6. Service and Context
7. Increase Bandwidth for Company-Specific Content



1 Optimizing Resources for Cost Efficiency

Training is very much a “hands-on” business that involves people directly who not only are subject matter experts involved in creating content and leading classroom instruction, but others who might be involved in scheduling, giving assessments, program review, production, and more.

That involvement shows, especially when it comes to content creation. According to a [study done by Chapman Alliance](#), a single hour of instructor-led training can take anywhere from 22 to 82 hours of work and preparation time, with the average being around 40 hours.

A survey by the Association for Talent Development found roughly the same results, also noting that digital content takes longer to develop (on average), and that the time required varies directly with the complexity of the interactions involved.

When so much time is spent creating and deploying content, more strategic considerations often take a backseat. No wonder leadership begins to wonder whether the training they are paying for is actually producing a return on their investment. It’s a little like having a construction company responsible for building a house, but the crew spends a full 40 hours a week splitting and cutting their lumber. In the end they have all the right materials, but the house never gets built.

OTS content can free up much of the time and talent being used to create “standard” content. **A single hour of instructor-led training can take anywhere from 22 to 82 hours of work and preparation time, with the average being around 40 hours.**



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2 Speed to Immediate Use

With an OTS content library, providing employees with the information they need is simply a matter of enrolling them or giving them access. Theoretically, your entire workforce can have access to all of the content on day one of the implementation.

For example, suppose it's time for everyone to refresh their compliance training, or that your sales team wants a series on handling objections in light of recent sales figures. **As soon as the need arises, you can match content to those needs and provide access with a few clicks.**

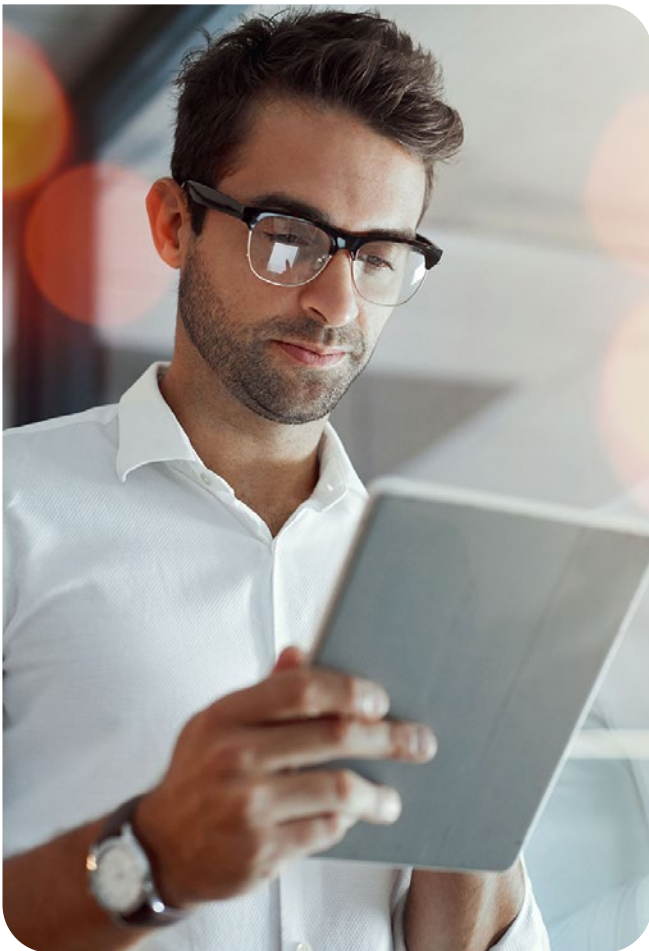
Contrast this with in-house content, which can be deployed only at the rate at which your team can create it. This becomes difficult when requests for specific courses start coming. Take the previous examples: How would that sales team feel when you explain that their courses have to be made over a 2-year period? Would the team be able to have a consistent learning experience, let alone remember the content they learned from video to video? How would HR feel when you have to explain that compliance training cannot even start for another eight months, since you have six months' worth of content creation backlog? **OTS content gives you the ability to immediately respond to their needs.**

Additional wins! Pre-built modules are ready for rollout as soon as they're purchased, allowing you to meet urgent needs. New hires can access relevant training or resources right away, accelerating time-to-productivity.



3 The Range of Topics and Subject Matter Expertise

Employees need training across a broad spectrum of topics, from role-specific training to more general topics like safety, compliance, and communications. Even if your organization has these “basics” covered, there’s always the need for even more advanced topics, such as decision-making, problem solving, creativity, behavioral assessment (like DISC), and so on. It’s pretty rare to find an organization that has internal team members who are subject matter experts in all of these areas.



Quality OTS content is created in consultation with subject matter experts ensuring information is accurate, up-to-date, and in line with regulations. With it, you can guarantee that learners are getting the best education without having to have extensive expertise in-house.

This advantage is even more noticeable when L&D departments get a one-off request from an internal stakeholder. For example, a new team leader could feel overwhelmed in his role and ask for time management content. Is it worth the L&D team’s time to create a one-off video training for this one person?

Probably not. But if you have access to a library of OTS content, you could find something that fits this person’s needs without having to reinvent the wheel—like our training video, *The Art of Saying No*. That way, there would be no delay in delivering

the content, and no wasted resources spent creating content that might not be used on a regular basis (although it is always available when you do need it!).

4 Leveraging Best Practices in Adult Learning

There have been many developments in the training industry in the past decade. Microlearning and social learning are on the rise, with mobile devices now the go-to platform for many learners. Keeping up with these developments, and putting them into practice, can easily overtax an in-house team.

There have also been strides made in both technology and creative design when it comes to visuals and acting/voice talent. **Besides subject matter expertise, content developers need to be experts in design, script writing, slide creation, video production, editing, and more.** It's also important to have consistent messaging so all learners receive the same baseline knowledge and skills.

Providers that specialize in creating training content will invest in this kind of talent. For example, creating training content is what we do 24/7 at [HSI](#). We have invested heavily in our video production capabilities and post-production editing tools, adding sound effects, and music in addition to the design, writing, and acting talent. This leads to more polished and professional training videos that are more likely to grab attention and establish credibility. **Employees will participate more actively in training, enhancing both knowledge retention and the practical application of the content.**



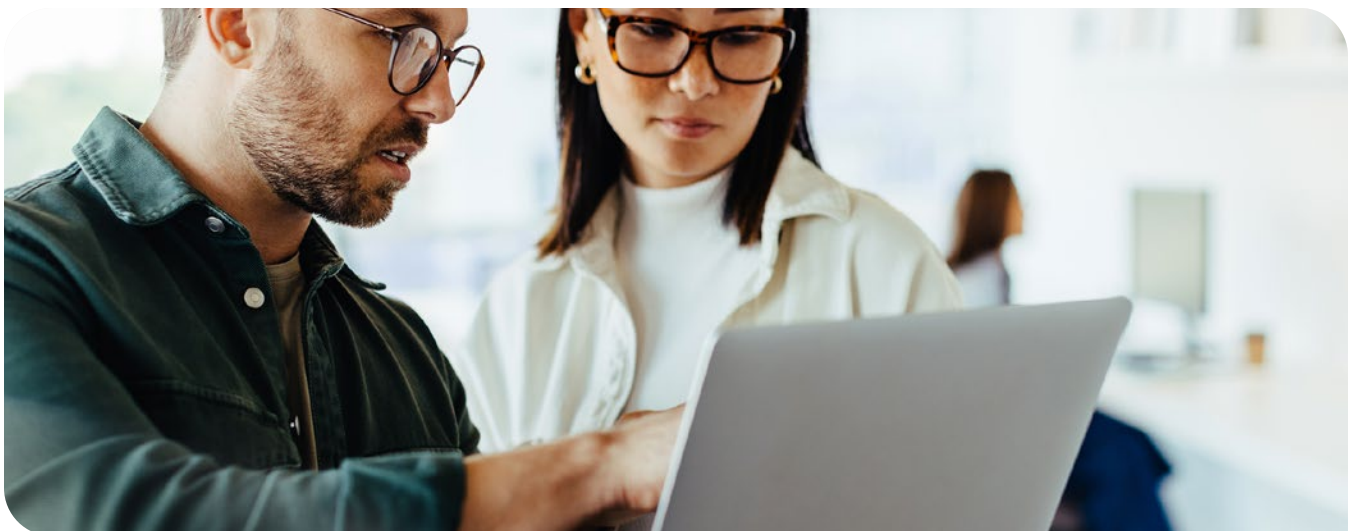
5 Compliance and Risk Mitigation

Besides keeping current with the best practices in adult learning, some subject areas need to stay current with complex and changing laws and regulations. This is often the case with HR compliance training, environmental issues, safety training, and inclusion. This creates a one-two punch. On the one hand, changes in law may require different kinds and amounts of training. California, for example, has made many increases to the amount of anti-harassment training required and the topics covered. Such changes can easily render your current anti-harassment courses obsolete.

On the other hand, the content of the courses itself may become obsolete with time. What were considered best practices a decade ago surely would not be adequate today. Even if your training requirements do not change, the information your employees need to receive might.

When shopping for OTS content, it is vitally important to make sure the content provider has a process in place to stay on top of these changes, and make the needed changes on an ongoing basis.

Even if your training requirements do not change, the information your employees need to receive might. Training providers update content whenever necessary to meet new laws and standards. Consistent messaging ensures all employees receive the same, compliant information, reducing legal and operational risk.



6 Service and Context

Learning involves a skill that is more than just absorbing content. Content itself is just one part of a more complex learning ecosystem that includes strategy, technology, learning culture, management attitudes, and more.

This means that finding the right content for your organization is more than a matter of finding an article or video on a particular topic at a team’s request.

- Choose content that aligns with the organization’s goals and values.
- Organize content into learning paths for professional development.
- Record completion and measure retention.

If you find a reputable content partner, it should already have processes in place to help you do these things—and answer any questions you may have along the way.



7 Increased Bandwidth for Company-Specific Content

Some content cannot be created ahead of time by a third party, simply because it is specific to your organization. For example, an onboarding course that discusses your company's specific policies, benefits, and mission could not be an OTS offering. The same would go for training materials that discuss industry-specific language or reporting.

Using OTS content for topics that are not company specific frees your team to work on these more custom projects. With more time and resources dedicated to them, there's more opportunity to create a quality course and keep that content up to date.

For example, topics such as [anti-harassment](#) and business skills lend themselves to using OTS content. A manufacturer that uses this content for those specific topics can then focus team resources on content specific to their own manufacturing process. This can help the team reach the 40 hours needed to create each hour of quality training material. Using OTS content for topics that are not company specific frees your team to work on these more custom projects.



Additional Considerations in Outsourcing OTS Content

The decision to outsource OTS content isn't just about selecting a qualified L&D partner. Be sure to consider the following:

Investment

If your organization has a large L&D department that has already invested heavily in creating its own content—complete with in-house video production equipment and skilled talent—leadership will naturally want to see those resources fully utilized to justify the investment.

In these situations, allocating additional budget to OTS content can be a nuanced decision. On one hand, this content can free up your internal team to focus on specialized or strategic initiatives. On the other hand, some may worry it signals a potential reduction in internal content creation.

The ideal scenario is finding a learning platform that supports both approaches—allowing you to upload and deliver your own internal content alongside OTS courses in a single, integrated environment. This way, you get the efficiency and breadth of OTS content without sidelining the unique value of your in-house expertise.



Things to consider when outsourcing OTS content:

- Investment
- Leadership Buy-In
- Familiarity
- Breadth and Depth



Leadership Buy-In

Change can be hard, and many decision makers are more comfortable with keeping training content creation in-house. It is up to the L&D leadership to explain the value of OTS content and justify the investment. **Even then, the new content and delivery will be closely watched, making measurement and reporting critical.**



Familiarity

When you first partner with an L&D training provider it may take some time for you to familiarize yourself with the content library. **However, HSI's library has a search functionality that is sophisticated and simple to use so your administrators can easily find and assign courses.** HSI is sure to keep you informed of new releases and updates.



Breadth and Depth

A solid OTS content library should have content at different levels of depth and expertise. For example, anti-harassment training for HR specialists should be more technical and in-depth than the ones for employees. A safety course should address topics in ways that reflect the different roles and responsibilities of warehouse floor staff and their managers.

Incorporating OTS Content into Your Learning Ecosystem

Even if you invest in a large library of OTS content, this does not mean all of your training must revolve around it. OTS content works best when you find smart ways to blend that existing content with your own custom content and form it into well-considered learning paths. Here are some ways to do just that:

Build specific learning paths using OTS content as the building blocks. Several shorter videos can be used together to create a training sequence for employees. For example, perhaps you have a sequence for onboarding, or for employees who desire a management position. You can also create learning tracks around specific competencies.

Use OTS video as the basis for a custom course. Suppose you have a video showing some important sales skills, but you also need to address specific product information. Or maybe you need a compliance course but require a section that reviews your company's policies specifically. You can start with an off-the-shelf video and then customize it, adding not just your company logo and introduction but content specific to your needs.

Assign OTS content as a course prerequisite (or refresher). You may already have courses developed for certain topics. If these are in-person training courses, assigning a short video course is a great way to acquaint learners to those topics before they even step foot in the classroom. They can also serve as a good refresher after the course, too.

Start incorporating OTS content during periods of change. One of our clients mentioned that he wanted to change his longer lecture-style training sessions into a microlearning format. He confessed he had no idea where to start. Fortunately, most of our OTS video content is in a microlearning format! Instead of having to reinvent entire courses, our clients can simply pick and choose from our content library and deploy their updated training program much quicker!



In Summary

Off-the-shelf training content offers immediate value by saving time, reducing development costs, and providing high-quality learning resources. Organizations that leverage curated content libraries can address compliance, technical, and soft skills training needs quickly and consistently. By blending off-the-shelf content with internal resources, you create a scalable learning ecosystem that supports employee development and organizational success.

Additional Resources

HSI's eBook, [What Are the Costs of Not Training?](#)

HSI's Whitepaper, [The Power of Microlearning: A Proven Learning Strategy for Workplaces](#)

About HSI



HSI is your single-source partner for EHS, Compliance, and Professional Development solutions. HSI provides integrated e-learning content, training solutions, and cloud-based software designed to enable your business to improve safety, operations, and employee development. Across all industries, HSI helps safety managers, and technical employees, human resources, first responders, and operational leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe, and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements. HSI's focus is on training, software, and services for safety and compliance, workforce development, industrial skills, and emergency care. HSI is a unique partner that offers a suite of cloud-based software solutions including learning management, safety management, chemical SDS management, and more, integrated with content and training so businesses can not only monitor and manage multiple workflows in one system, but train employees via one partner.

For more information, visit [hsi.com](https://www.hsi.com)