


E-LEARNING



Lockdown is for learning

In an ever-changing world, eLearning has emerged as a hero for offering the flexibility we all need. Debbie Soloman tells us how lockdown learners are taking advantage of what's on offer

In our busy and ever-changing lives, the benefits of eLearning have never been more relevant, and even those who were once reluctant are now seeing its huge pluses. As many of us are juggling a multitude of commitments with work, family, and some even retraining for other industries – the “always on” aspect of eLearning has at least doubled in value. In short, eLearning is ready when you are – and right now, that's essential.

On top of the convenience aspect, there's been a real mood for bettering ourselves and developing personally and professionally in the last 10 months or so too. With people now unable to freely socialise as they once did, many have chosen to utilise that time to progress and develop their skill-set, and progress along the ladder.

New Normal

Online technologies have had a shot in the arm and progressed rapidly over the course of the last year, – and that's something we can all relate to: even the way video conferencing on platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams have become the main method for meetings would have seemed massively progressive this time last year. And with all of us becoming increasingly accepting, even excited, about these remote working technologies, any preconceived ideas about eLearning are also shifting significantly.

It turns out most of us like to have meetings without leaving our home; we like being able to pause for ten minutes and take the dog for a walk, or stay in our comfiest jeans all day. We're fast becoming

a nation of home-birds, and so going to learn face-to-face, even post-pandemic, will seem an increasingly questionable use of our valued time, as well as a big saving on travel expenses.

What's more, eLearning is streets ahead when it comes to pricing. There could still be a case for softer skills such as leadership training, but for technical skills, eLearning is where it's at. Reason enough for many to turn to online portals to reap the rewards of eLearning. And the benefits are manifold. All eLearning is accessible on-the-go, which makes it ideal for our changing lifestyles and varying commitments. eLearning is also repeatable, meaning that sections which need further consolidation are readily on offer, wherever, whenever.



Accessing quality learning has never been easier

Some might find this repetition aspect surprisingly powerful, but research shows it's actually key. The reason why is simple: Repetition leads to consolidation. Only 30% of what you learn on a face-to-face course is retained after 24 hours, and just 10% after a week. A pretty poor return for a large investment in time and money. While you might walk away with a certificate from a face-to-face course, it's got to be asked: how much have you really learnt?

New flexibility

For those whose new normal involves a switch to home-working, many are experiencing a more flexible approach to life that they might not have experienced before. And eLearning fits with this brilliantly.

With eLearning you can choose to learn whenever and wherever, across devices, and pick up where you left off. There's no need to look smart or travel, for you can easily be accessing quality learning from the comfort of your home and in your slippers. Perhaps inevitably, people's perception of eLearning has shifted quite significantly.

Companies such as GIS247 are finding that students already with an account are logging-on more often, and also at different times during lockdown, with increased evening traffic to its eLearning portal. This perhaps reflects their other commitments during the day, whether it be working from home or supporting children who are home-schooling.

Growing reputation

eLearning has had a negative connotation for some people and been regarded as a poor substitute for face-to-face training. The author believes this is down to those who have enjoyed the social interaction

of traditional training and their ability to ask questions directly if needing help on a particular issue.

However, many of the reluctant have had their preconceived ideas challenged in 2020, either because many face-to-face courses were simply unavailable, or that those who'd never considered eLearning were now seeing it as an option - and

having a positive experience simply by giving it a try.

The author also considers that well-structured and thorough courses such as those delivered by GIS247 over the past 20 years have managed to cover all questions and issues that might arise, either in online or face-to-face training.

Business as usual

The good news is that no matter what happens in the world, the need for training never goes away. Life has been anything but normal over the last year, and while many businesses have had to change and adapt quite suddenly, for those in the eLearning field it has been pretty much "business as usual".

Debbie Solomon is Business Development & Training Director at GIS247, an online learning portal that has provided training for users of Esri ArcGIS, ArcGIS Pro and QGIS software over the past decade. The portal also delivers educational modules on key GIS concepts and topics, including Ordnance Survey's digital data products and new Data Hub. Also covered is the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA), the Geospatial Commission's commitment to upskilling and learning. More at www.gis247.com

