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7 **ESSENTIALS** FOR VIRTUAL **SOFTWARE TRAINING**

Hands-on Virtual Training Drives your Business

SEVEN BEST PRACTICES

to help any instructor manage the transition from in-person delivery to virtual delivery and provide effective and engaging training on a software package.

Digital assets are increasing daily. Software companies have seen a rise in the volume of enterprise data and the automation of business processes, forcing them to accelerate the deployment of enterprise software and services within multiple IT environments.

Virtual training platforms help shorten sales and adoption cycles of software products by addressing customization, testing, maintenance, and support issues from the get-go with little to no dependency on IT resources. Features that foster independence, intuitive controls, and integrated communication make it easy for instructors and users to plug in, get started, and support each other in no time.

Harness the power of virtual lab technology and implement these essential best practices to save time, reduce overhead costs, and automate processes to simplify the delivery of hands-on application training.

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"See, Show, Do"
Hands-on practice
can increase student
retention by **85%**

#1 TAILOR THE MATERIAL

The key to developing a meaningful training course is to tailor the materials for online delivery. Here's how:

> **Include hands-on practice for students.**
> Employ a "Say, Show, Do" approach – first, teach the concept and practice it with students; then, allow students to practice on their own.

> **Break content into smaller sections.**
> Online courses are more engaging when presented as short segments. Use a cycle of 10–15-minute sections that add up to a total concept every hour to maximize student attention span.

> **Illustrate your point.**
> Create animated PowerPoint slides – with builds at each step – for diagrams and other graphics to illustrate ideas, much as you would with a classroom whiteboard.

> **Use video and graphics rather than detailed text bullets in your slides.**
> Students will pay more attention to your words if they are not written out on your slides. Save this space for engaging graphics and video clips to emphasize your talk.

> **Pause for feedback often.**
> Use a mix of online feedback features, like the chat window, online polls, and emoticons, in addition to simply asking your students if they have questions.

> **Plan in breaks.**
> Monitor fatigue means students need more breaks during an online class than they might in person. Because you cannot see when students are becoming restless or in need of a break, plan for frequent rest stops.

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#2 FIND A TECHNOLOGY
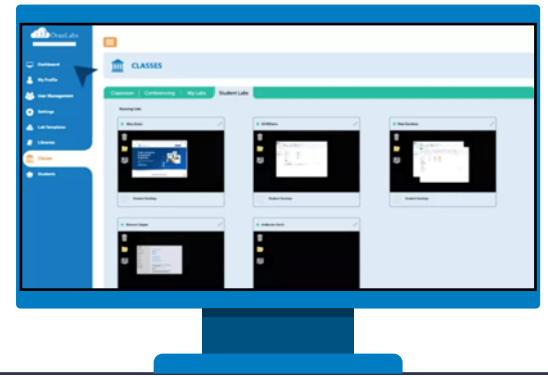
The second step to creating a powerful training course is to find a technology to facilitate interaction. Web meeting packages like Zoom, WebEx, and Teams are excellent choices for online meetings, but additional tools may be needed to supplement what they lack in capabilities needed for robust software training. Instead, look for a platform with the following product requirements:

> **Instructor broadcast.**
Whatever tool you use must broadcast the instructor feed to all students. At a minimum, this should include both audio and screen sharing, but two-way video and chat capabilities can enhance engagement.

> **Dedicated sandboxes with software preinstalled and preconfigured.**
This type of solution ensures every participant has exactly the same environment to work in and allows you to use the trainer sandbox to deliver instruction while students follow along and complete hands-on practice. Ideally, the sandboxes are deployed as cloud resources, making the average cost significantly less than buying and reserving physical hardware.

> **Instructor monitoring.**
You should have the ability to see all student screens in real time while they use their sandboxes. This information can then be used to dynamically adjust your delivery.

> **Support for multiple training styles.**
At a minimum, the technology should have modes for both instructor-led training and self-paced classes, allowing you to offer different consumption models with the same content.

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#3 CONDUCT AN "OPEN HOUSE"

Once a training technology is selected, help students become familiar with the platform before class starts by hosting an "Open House," or trial class. This should occur within a week before the actual class starts and run for several hours, with each student logging in at their convenience for a 5–10-minute review. If the technology has the appropriate monitoring features, the instructor can stay logged in to the class during this time to offer assistance. This will save valuable time when the real course begins.

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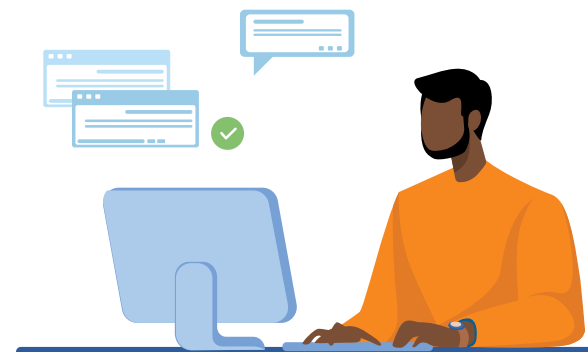
#4 ACTIVELY ENGAGE

When the time comes to host your training courses, keep students actively involved in the lesson by asking questions of them. Here's how to use this approach effectively to maximize engagement:

> **Ask frequent questions.**
Intentionally calling on students to respond to questions during the class helps students to process the material and allows you as the instructor to validate their understanding of it.

> **Vary delivery of your questions.**
Try to modify your approach between sections. Take polls, ask factual questions, or have students volunteer examples. Students invested in the content are more likely to stay involved.

> **Take advantage of the feedback mechanisms of your technology.**
For example, have students electronically raise their hands; ask questions and use emoticons to count their responses; ask students to write answers in the chat window; in smaller classes, open microphones and allow students to speak; ask students to give a quick "thumbs-up" in their video if they are ready to move on.

> **Do not move on until you get the feedback requested.**
Be sure to allow students appropriate time to respond to any questions asked.

> **Call on students by name.**
If you find students are quiet, calling on them by name and asking an easy question gets their attention and shows that you are interested in them.

> **Turn on video streaming.**
Establishing a personal connection with students is critical. The more anonymous you are, the less connection students will have with you – and your class. Turn on your video and, if class size allows, encourage students to do the same. Make it fun with an icebreaker, like asking students to show the view out of their window, or by offering a prize.

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#5 MONITOR STUDENT SANDBOXES

Using a technology platform that allows you to see the screen in student sandboxes in real time is particularly important when using a 3-stage "Say, Show, Do" teaching style. Incorporating exercises to guide students through an example gives them opportunity to practice employing the material. When you can see in real time what students are doing, you can:

> **Monitor**
engagement and learning pace

> **Adjust**
your delivery accordingly

> **Troubleshoot**
any problems as they arise

A dual-monitor setup – with one monitor to broadcast your sandbox and one to privately observe students – will help facilitate the sandbox model.

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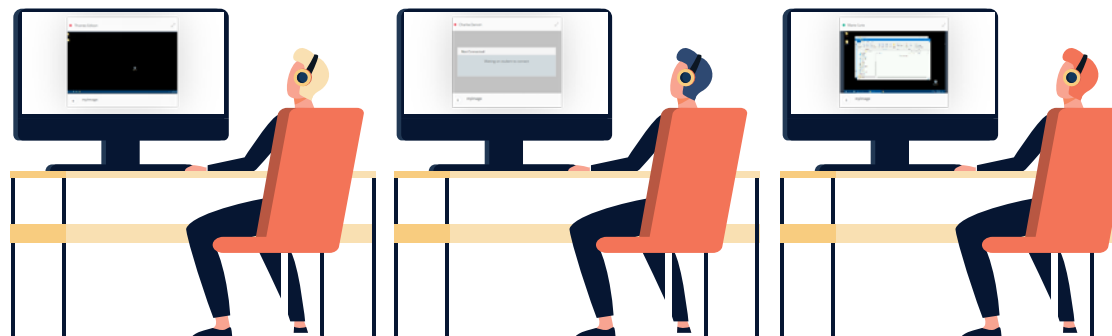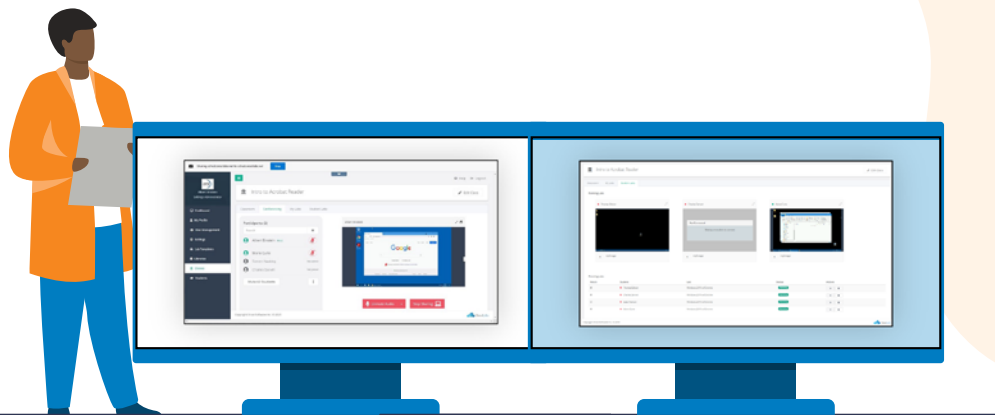
#6 SAVE SNAPSHOTS

Employ a technology platform that allows your software sandboxes to be saved along way. In most systems, this is referred to as a "snapshot," or a rollback point. There are many benefits to this feature:

> **Snapshots provide a backup.**
This is particularly important in multi-day classes when student progress can be saved and revisited each day.

> **Snapshots allow rollback.**
If you can restore any previous version of a lab at the click of a button, then students feel more confident to experiment. The more they experiment, the more they learn. And the more they practice, the more they retain.

> **Snapshots can save you money.**
When using cloud-based tools, there are usage fees for every resource. But often, these services only charge you when resources are running. With snapshots, you can start and stop the student labs at will, minimizing run-time charges.

#7 REINFORCE RETENTION

Offset cloud fees for further use by moving sandboxes into a lower-priority cloud configuration.

Once the class is over, proactively reinforce what you have taught. Virtual training allows for unique opportunities you may not have in a traditional class:

> **Take advantage of technology.**
> Many virtual training tools allow you to schedule 'Thank You' emails after each class as well as other notifications, making it easy to establish a regular cadence of communication.

> **Link to online resources.**
> In your emails, include usage tips, links to online help resources, and complementary blog or web content that students can access at their convenience. These communications can strengthen the personal relationship between you and your students and help establish you as a reliable expert.

> **Keep student sandboxes for extended practice time.**
> Allow students access to their sandboxes for some period of time after class ends. This encourages students to continue their education and will dramatically improve long-term retention. Newly acquired skills fade quickly without reinforcement.

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BEFORE CLASS

> Tailor material for online delivery.

> Choose a technology with hands-on labs, real-time monitoring, and integrated conferencing.

> Conduct an open house to ensure readiness.

DURING CLASS

> Actively engage students.

> Monitor student sandboxes in real time.

> Save snapshots of the work.

AFTER CLASS

> Reinforce retention through follow-up communications and resources.

ORASILABS CAN HELP YOU TAKE THE VIRTUAL LEAP

If you're transitioning your training programs from onsite, in-person to online virtual training – or even exploring a hybrid approach - virtualizing training dramatically reduces the effort and cost required to deploy and maintain these environments. Make the leap into today's world of virtual training by leveraging a virtual labs platform and implementing these best practices across each stage of the training process to ensure your classes are accessible, relevant, and effective.

For a
14-day free trial
visit:

https://orasilabs.com/free-trial/

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OrasiLabs, by DevSecOps innovator Orasi, is the train anyone, anywhere, anytime AWS cloud-native virtual eLearning platform to train and collaborate with groups of any size, in any location, with minimal manual effort. It enables companies to deliver the highest quality content without wasting time configuring complex training environments and empowers employees to achieve maximum knowledge retention and rapidly apply what they learn.

OrasiLabs saves time, reduces overhead, and automates processes to simplify the delivery of application training, and provides an enhanced learning experience for everyone.

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