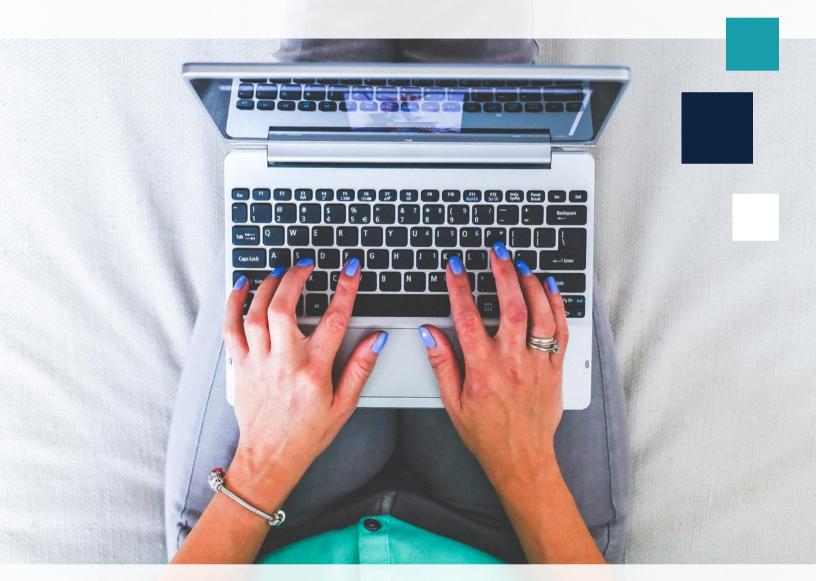
The Remote Work eBook:

Your Guide to Creating Effective Remote Workplace Learning Programs









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Abstract

The world as we know it is changing, and the approaches companies use to support their team's learning and development initiatives have had to change drastically in order to keep pace, and will likely continue to do so as new societal norms and health and safety precautions become integrated into standard business operation protocols and practices. In today's professional landscape, the safety, convenience, and wellbeing of your learners must be top priority in order to ensure your team is confident, well-equipped, and can drive organizational success - regardless of whether they are working from home or in an office.

eThink has created this Remote Work eBook to help organizations create engaging and sustainable remote workplace eLearning programs that can support learner needs and workplace practices as they continue to evolve. In this guide, we'll discuss the growing trends in the workplace, strategies and solutions to revolutionize digital L&D, and how to ensure your organization is prepared to effectively support the success of your teams for years to come.



The Current Climate and Onward: What Do We Expect the Professional Landscape to Look Like from Here?

Before the historic outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote environments were already a growing trend. Virtually every area of our life, from activities like filing taxes to applying for a job to even purchasing a car, are increasingly being streamlined through technology. Looking ahead, the impact of COVID-19 is likely to have lasting results, with many companies that were forced to maintain a remote workforce due to health concerns saying that they'll continue to offer remote work as a benefit for employees to take advantage of moving forward.

Now more than ever it is arguable that no sector of business can thrive long-term without incorporating some form of remote work. Whether it is a part of a company's business continuity plans or something to incorporate into your daily **company culture**, employees are seeking positions that provide the flexibility and convenience of working from home to some extent. According to *Forbes*, 74% of CFOs have already reported that they intend to make the shift to remote work for some employees a permanent one post-COVID in order to meet the needs of today's workforce.

Digitizing Your Training Programs for Remote Work

For many organizations, Learning & Development (L&D) is a prime business function that can be leveraged and optimized through digital environments. With the right tools and strategies, remote L&D can be leveraged far beyond a part of a business continuity plan, but rather as a way to continuously deliver dynamic synchronous and asynchronous training experiences using diversified content that effectively engages learners and supports them within their roles. Today's employees want accessible and engaging learning that allows them to efficiently complete trainings, easily access resources

where and when it's convenient and relevant for them, and to better retain important information long-term in order to improve job performance and build skillsets.



According to The Times' 2019

Learning and Development Report, 59% of global talent developers said they're spending more on online learning solutions while 39% spent less on instructor-led trainings within the last three years.

Whether remote work is something that will be mandated to some extent in every organization is yet to be determined, but it seems likely. Arguably, organizations who recognize the value of utilizing some form of distance learning or remote work will be better positioned to adapt in the future as opposed to those who haven't followed suit yet.

Some of the key benefits of a remote workplace learning program include:

Safe & Easy to Roll Out

In the event of an emergency where offices or other onsite locations are closed or access has been restricted, distance learning can help minimize disruptions in terms of productivity and provide continuous access to necessary resources. A remote learning program can be incredibly useful in emergency situations or when remote work makes the most sense. With a digital training solution in place, L&D admins can give learners the ability to complete coursework without the need to commute or put others at risk during a health crisis, for example. Additionally, a digital platform can help keep people connected and informed when it is needed most.

Flexible Schedule & Location

Having a learning platform that you can access on virtually any device lets your team do their trainings wherever and whenever they like, allowing them to catch up on courses or resources around their busy schedules. This also helps deliver timely or on-the-job learning even in offline environments, which typically results in a more impactful learning experience when constituents can apply what they have learned soon after it has been taught.



Cost-Effective

In most instances, a digital learning platform, such as a Learning Management System (LMS), can provide learning at a significantly lower cost than instructorled courses and onsite trainings. More specifically, an open-source LMS which is free to access, can provide a flexible, configurable, and interoperable learning solution that can support multiple styles of formal and informal learning and typically at a lower cost than the alternatives in the market.

Increases Productivity

Distance learning allows learners to take courses or review resources on their own time, preventing the need to steal work hours or days away for an ILT (Instructor-Led Training). This allows employees to perform daily duties as usual and get in some training during off-hours.

Revolutionizes the L&D Process

The typical lecture-then-exam approach to learning is quickly becoming outdated and is often proven ineffective long-term. Innovations in eLearning technology allow you to transform the digital learning experience by including unique tools and solutions tailored to the needs of your industry. For example, companies can take advantage of eLearning strategies like gamification, badging, simulations and much more in order to provide employee training in an engaging and stimulating way.

By providing your organization with the capability to easily adapt to meet changing needs, digital learning also allows you to "future-proof" your training programs. This can be encouraged through the flexibility of digitizing your training programs with an LMS, as well as taking a digital approach to the entire learning ecosystem and identifying what other tools can integrate with the LMS or otherwise support the L&D initiative.



The Learning Management System: Your Transit to a Remote Learning Ecosystem

The Learning Management System, or LMS, is no longer a "nice to have" item but a necessity when it comes to supporting remote learning. The Learning Management System's role varies depending on what goals an organization is looking to achieve and the capabilities of your platform. However, the main objective of the LMS is typically to host, track, and deliver online learning. These platforms provide a virtual hub where learners can access training resources, helping to make training accessible for remote learners by providing a central location for training across various departments of an organization and/or multiple locations. The LMS can help organizations weather change, emergencies, or unprecedented situations, while also providing a flexible, scalable, and cost-effective learning solution that can meet the unique needs of different audiences within your organization.

Learning Management Systems are being used in all stages of life where learning takes place from primary, secondary, and higher education to online training and professional education in the workplace. That said, an LMS can be used by companies in virtually every industry, by learners of all levels, and for

for a multitude of uses. Virtually every type of organization or industry can benefit from an LMS including:



Some aspects of workplace learning that can be modernized or enhanced through the flexibility and convenience of a blended or fully remote online environment include:

- Onboarding
- Workplace Safety Training
- Product Knowledge and Training
- Competency-Based Training
- Continuing Education

- Regulatory Compliance
- Recurring Certifications
- Sales Onboarding
- Extended Enterprise
- Volunteer Enablement

Benefits of a Remote LMS

Some advantages to using an LMS for streamlining and organizing learning plans include:

Increased Collaboration and Activity

One of the things employees tend to miss the most about working in an office is the regular interaction with coworkers. Even if people typically handle their job duties alone, the impromptu brainstorming, casual conversations, or even friendly greetings that happen throughout the day can have a positive effect on an employee's emotional outlook and provide added value to working at your organization. An LMS can provide opportunities for interaction on forums or in company-wide activities.



For example, our company likes to use our LMS as a culture-building tool and we frequently provide company-wide initiatives that are managed through the LMS like job swaps and more. In this way, the LMS can ensure that employees still enjoy human interaction and connection with their colleagues while working from home.

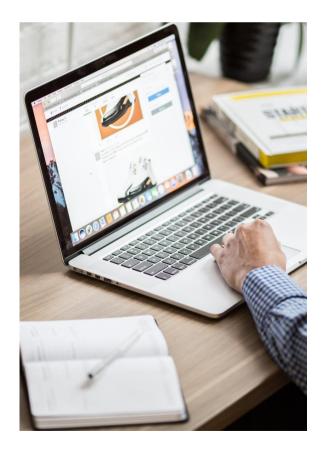
Convenient Contact

Thanks to online, cloud-based training solutions, reaching groups of employees and individual team members is easy for L&D managers. Whether this means sharing announcements on forums, encouraging video conferencing sessions or providing interactive training materials, the platform is accessible anytime and anywhere and can push out notifications as needed.

Engaging Professional Development

Personalized, relevant training activities via the LMS often provide more tangible, engaging, and measurably successful learning experiences. The

ensuing boost in skills or knowledge is often accompanied by a mirrored boost in morale, confidence, and performance. In this way, providing employees with professional development that supports their professional success keeps them motivated. Additionally, engaging with corporate training programs can have an energizing effect, reminding workers what to prioritize in their daily duties and encouraging them to continuously improve their performance.



Team-Strengthening Activities

Many businesses organize group training sessions. The opportunity to socialize and learn with other people can have an excellent impact on employee satisfaction and productivity. These sessions also provide a chance for employees to realign their daily activities with the company mission. Virtual trainings can be conducted across departments and locations through the LMS, allowing you to better connect organization members through engaging L&D.



Open-Source vs. Closed-Source LMS: Does it Matter?

When looking to leverage an LMS to support your learning programs, it is extremely important to consider the type of technology your LMS uses. Why? Because this plays a huge role in what type of functionality and design capabilities your LMS will possess, the support options available, and the level of interoperability between your existing systems.

Types of LMS Technology

Learning Management Systems are either built using open-source technology, closed-source technology, or a hybrid mix of both.

Open-Source Software:

Denotes software for which the original code is made freely available and may be redistributed and modified.

Closed-Source Software: Unlike open-source systems, closed-source software (also referred to as proprietary software) does not share its code.

Open Source: Scalable, Sustainable Remote Workplace Learning

Here at eThink, we are an unwavering advocate of open-source products. An open-source LMS gives you the flexibility to utilize a best-of-breed content strategy and incorporate the best content and eLearning tools into your platform. There are limited restrictions to what is possible, giving open-source applications a lot of flexibility in terms of configuration, functionality, and support.

When fully utilized, open-source technology also provides other advantages including security, ownership of data, high service standards, cutting-edge technology, seamless integrations and a suite of third-party plugin options.

From a high-level perspective, these are the main benefits of an open-source LMS:

- Security. "Open source" denotes visible code, which can often be misconstrued as lacking security. However, it is quite the opposite! With more eyes on the code, security glitches are recognized much faster and patches are turned around almost immediately.
- Ownership of Data: With a closed-source (or proprietary) vendor, they have the power to raise prices or even charge you to buy back your own data if you decide to switch solutions. With an open-source system, you will always own your data and your LMS code. If you are not satisfied with your current hosting partner, open source allows you to easily bring your learning platform in-house or move to a different service provider, leaving you in control of your data.
- Additional Support: As mentioned, the code for most open-source solutions is freely available. With a closed-source option, only that

company can support and service the chosen platform. If service isn't up to par, you don't have any other options for support, often leaving companies feeling locked in. *This may be the biggest advantage for an open-source LMS: when you go open source, you pay primarily for service.* This means that not only will you have the freedom and flexibility to choose the best type of LMS support to meet your learning goals, but you should expect the highest level of service from your open-source LMS provider who knows that support is their main value proposition.

Most Up-to-Date System: Open-source software is typically backed by a large community of developers, partners, and users who constantly monitor and make improvements to the platform. This not only helps ensure the integrity of the code, but allows developers and users across the globe to contribute to the development of the product in direct relation to their needs, as opposed to closed-source solution upgrades that can only be made by the company. Many open-source products have community forums where users can submit enhancements to the code which are then reviewed by headquarters, often allowing for product development to be made at a quicker speed in this type of communitypowered environment. Additionally, certified LMS hosting partners of open-source products often allocate a portion of their profits towards the product's development, further funding product headquarters and supporting the latest needs of their clients – the learning professionals that are using the platform.

With the interoperability and scalability of open-source software, you can effectively create more engaging and personalized learning experiences that can meet learners' needs for years to come. Furthermore, an open-source LMS allows organizations to own and migrate their learning data to another hosting provider, giving L&D managers superior flexibility in terms of security and support. Open source allows you to build a best-of-breed eLearning platform that incorporates your industry's most effective tools and learning approaches, backed by valuable data and insights in a scalable, streamlined, and organized solution.

Learn more about eThink's open-source LMS solutions by exploring our products catalog, or read on for more information on the Moodle, Moodle Workplace, and Totara Learning Management Systems towards the end of this guide.

Explore Products









Building Your Learning Ecosystem to Support Remote Workplace Learning

Now that you understand the value of streamlining digital L&D through an LMS, how can you ensure a best-of-breed eLearning solution? Which elements do you need to include in your remote learning programs to meet the specific goals of your organization?

The learning ecosystem is the combination of tools and solutions used to deliver, manage, and track your training programs, both digital and otherwise. As the modern learning ecosystem constantly evolves, learners are finding new ways to immerse themselves in education with the help of new tools and technologies in the market that can create more impactful, personalized, and efficient learning experiences. The tools and technologies you choose to include within your learning ecosystem will have a direct impact on the success of your training programs.

While closed-source solutions typically prevent easy connectivity to other systems and plugins, open-source systems allow organizations to extend and build upon your LMS to create a best-of-breed, dynamic and cohesive learning ecosystem. Open-source LMS solutions mix and mingle well with other thirdparty products and invite limitless possibilities for tailoring the platform.

As new technologies emerge, it is easy to plug them into the learning ecosystem, allowing you to create a future-proof solution.



The pieces you choose to include in your ecosystem are ultimately up to you and the goals or needs of your training programs. However, some of the 8 most common considerations for other technology pieces to include in the learning ecosystem alongside your LMS are:

1. Experience API (xAPI) & Learning Record Stores (LRS)

As your approaches to remote learning become more diversified and you begin incorporating more tools into your learning ecosystem, it is important to be able to collect information from all of your L&D efforts, whether they happen within the LMS, on-the-job, or through a different tool. Incorporating an xAPI-enabled Learning Record Store (LRS) into your learning ecosystem allows you to collect both formal and informal learning data from a variety of sources to provide you with full visibility and insight into the entire learning

experience. With all your learning data recorded in one place, your team can effectively report on your most successful initiatives, recognize areas where learners or groups of learners might be struggling, and identify ways to improve the learning experience for the long term.

Recommended LRS Solutions:

EXPUTO **allen**interactions

2. Learning Experience Platforms (LXP)

One of the most important innovations in technology that continues to shape today's most effective training programs is the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to customize the learner experience. Learning administrators are looking for more than just a system to store and deliver eLearning content. In order to effectively reach the modern learner, personalized experiences where users are recommended specific content and coursework are proven to be much more engaging and impactful for constituents. This learning approach helps diversify training programs, guide learners through unique professional development that is more targeted, and increase employee engagement with L&D that meets the convenience and needs of different audiences within your organization. Learning Experience Platforms (LXP) help generate this type of experience, providing a Netflix-like curation of relevant courses and resources based on employee role, learner interests, previous coursework or completed certifications, and other learner factors and behaviors. An LXP can be added on top of an organization's existing LMS and aggregate learning content from multiple sources like Lynda.com, Skillsoft, or even YouTube. Whereas learning in an LMS is often driven by instructors, department manager or administrators, learning in an LXP is largely driven by the learners themselves. This allows for a broader range of content to be consumed, making it easier for managers to encourage employee engagement and collaboration in online learning.

Recommended LXP Solution:



3. Content

It's true, content will always reign king, but not every organization has the bandwidth or resources to create quality online training content internally. Fortunately, the market is filled with a vast array of content options from premade content used for basic skills training and compliance or or custom content built specifically to meet the needs of your organization or industry. With an interoperable system, integrations to third-party content providers can be leveraged for more cost-efficient and diverse content options. You can add video, quizzes, and external resources to your safety compliance training or leverage innovative learning tools that provide opportunities for virtual learning, simulations, and gamified learning activities that can better engage learners to be incorporated into your learning strategy, effectively diversifying your training content to appeal to different learning styles. Open-source LMS solutions allow you to easily import pre-made or custom content into your learning platform using open standards such SCORM, LTI, and xAPI.

Recommended Content Solutions:

For off-the-shelf content, we recommend OpenSesame, Vado, and iAM Learning. For custom content, we have a network of trusted partners we work with. Explore our custom content service here.

4. Mobile Learning

Incorporating mobile functionality into your LMS can significantly improve your training programs by making learning more accessible, digestible, and efficient. With a mobile application, learners can pick up lessons wherever they are and whenever they'd like via their phone, tablet or other mobile device, alleviating the need to coordinate in-person training sessions, reserve locations, and align schedules. A mobile LMS helps supports remote work or distance learning initiatives by making resources more easily accessible to learners whenever they might need them and ultimately providing a tailored, timely, and modernized component to your L&D programs. *Learn about the mobile functionality in Moodle and Moodle Workplace*.

5. eCommerce

Many organizations use their LMS platform for extended enterprise, providing trainings and courses that they might sell to educate consumers on a specific product or teach a specific skill set. An LMS Shopping Cart, or eCommerce platform, can be easily layered on top of your LMS to create seamless course transactions, enabling a streamlined process from course purchase to registration and completion. By using an LMS in coordination with eCommerce tools, you can significantly enhance the user experience for your customers, encourage repeat purchases, increase the number of courses sold overall, and support a larger community of learners more efficiently.



6. Collaborative Learning and Social Elements

Remote learning is a great tool that can support learners across departments

and locations, while also better connecting team members. Many principles of professional learning for your industry or organization likely apply to multiple employee groups, which makes your eLearning program a great tool to foster continuous education as well as community among team members while supporting them remotely.

Your LMS likely already includes a few elements to help with social connectivity and for providing feedback to other learners, such as audio and video recording capabilities, chat features, and message boards or forums. However, with an open-source LMS, you can leverage more dynamic educational tools and solutions within the industry for learners to more effectively collaborate and engage with one another. Face-to-face interactions through built-in web conferencing help learners brainstorm on key training objectives collectively as a team-building experience. Gamified learning content that includes leaderboards and the ability to attain badges and certifications help encourage friendly competition and provides a sense of accomplishment for learners after completing a course or compliance requirement. These collaborative and social elements can help encourage a culture of learning within the organization while increasing information retention and motivating learners to interact with L&D materials.

Recommended Social Learning Solutions:

For web conferencing, we recommend Zoom or Big Blue Button. For gamification, check out H5P.

7. Analytics & Reporting

Most L&D managers, at the bare minimum, track the completion of training program courses and resulting scores. However, advancements in eLearning technology and data capabilities allow you to collect more extensive information and conduct real-time analyses of learning progress on the individual, course, or even department level. Managers can report on who is doing well with training and who needs further instruction on a particular topic and can then create more personalized learning paths for these individuals.

Workplace training is an investment that not only costs money, but often takes time away from revenue-producing activities. It is therefore incumbent upon your L&D team to ensure the value of your initiatives, which can only be determined by leveraging analytics and reporting around the learning data in your LMS. This data, along with any outside learning data that may be collected in an LRS as mentioned previously, "takes the guessing game out of Learning & Development" and can help prove that job performance, individual skillsets, and business goals are positively impacted by your company's investment in professional L&D. By making data-driven decisions about how your training programs can positively influence company bottom line, you can prove the ROI of your training investment while reaching and exceeding business goals.

Recommended Analytics Solutions:





8. Additional Support

Building an effective remote workplace learning program requires time and expertise. The teams that support training programs often have their hands full with projects specific to their own roles, such as L&D managers whose focus is on the content of their courses and the user experience, and can likely benefit from additional support to make sure the company is getting the most out of their learning programs.

As mentioned, a flexible open-source LMS allows you to take advantage of multiple hosting options to help support your remote learning programs. An eLearning partner or LMS vendor can alleviate the workload when it comes to the back-end management of your training solution, and provide expertise and consulting around the tools in the industry that can revolutionize your learning programs. With the ability to source additional support for your training programs, your eLearning partner can virtually become an extension of your IT team and take care of the mundane and time-consuming tasks that are needed to maintain and upgrade the learning platform. When looking for additional LMS support, consider the factors below.



You can learn more about selecting an LMS and a high-quality LMS provider in these blog posts:

- LMS Evaluation Checklist: 5 Must-Have LMS Features
- *How To Create an LMS RFP to Ensure You Select the Best Possible Vendor*

Overall, it is always important to make sure your team is continuously measuring and enhancing your eLearning programs in order to maximize the value of your workplace learning initiatives. Alongside the LMS, incorporating some additional features, functionality, and eLearning solutions can help you better evaluate your most successful initiatives, draw valuable insights from formal and informal learning experiences, and provide more modernized training that is challenging, impactful, and fun! These solutions can include built-in functionality or third-party plugins and LMS add-ons. Either way, incorporating some or all of these elements mentioned above is extremely valuable in effectively and continuously empowering learners within your organization as your needs evolve.

Looking Ahead: How to Create a Scalable and Sustainable Remote Training Environment

Building a remote workplace training program with longevity in mind is the best way to ensure your platform will be able to scale and adapt to your company's changing needs. With a flexible and interoperable LMS solution and the right support model, you can create more accessible, engaging, and cost-effective professional development that can meet learners' needs now and in the future. All of the factors and elements we've already discussed, like the type of technology your LMS is using and whether it provides the ability to integrate and plug-and-play with other technologies, are essential in order to create a future-proof remote learning solution.

Open Source Learning Platforms

As mentioned, a dynamic learning ecosystem that can meet the needs of unique learners within your organization for years to come can be achieved most easily through the flexibility and interoperability of open-source LMS technology. These solutions lead the industry in helping provide highly configurable and sustainable eLearning to organizations globally. Learn more about the open-source learning platforms that are available in the market that can provide a tailored, future-proof training solution below.

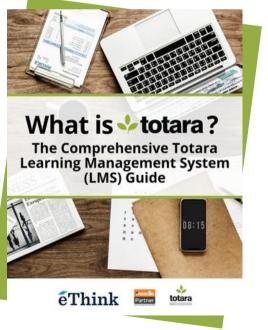


Totara Learn is an open enterprise LMS that enables organizations to deliver learning through individual learning plans which reflect your employees' roles, training needs and objectives. Used by over 12 million learners worldwide across more than 1,600 organizations, Totara Learn is uniquely suited for corporate learning initiatives including employee onboarding, professional development, performance management, regulatory certifications, and succession planning.

The Totara LMS provides a functionally rich learning platform which can be implemented quickly and at a fraction of the cost of proprietary solutions. Totara Learn is supported by Totara HQ, Totara Partners like eThink, and a strong global community.

To learn more about Totara, check out our Comprehensive Totara LMS Guide.

View Guide



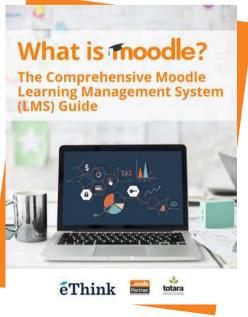
Thoodle

The world's most widely used Learning Management System, Moodle empowers millions of educators and learners across the globe with a highly functional, flexible, and interoperable digital learning solution. Founded and developed in 2002, Moodle was designed to be an open, robust, secure, and free platform that can provide tailored learning environments to support learning and training needs for a wide range of institutions and organizations.

Today, Moodle has over 150,000 registered implementations worldwide supporting over 210 million learners. Moodle is supported by a strong global community, including the Moodle HQ team as well as developers, Certified Moodle Partners, and users around the world. Additional benefits of Moodle include:

- Superior Product & Functionality Capabilities
- Flexible, Modular Open-Source LMS
- Powerful, Safe, and Secure eLearning

To learn more about Moodle, check out the Comprehensive MoodleLMS Guide.



View Guide

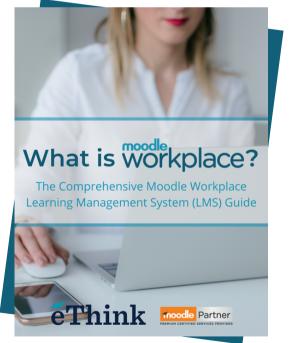
workplace

Moodle Workplace is an exciting expansion of the core Moodle LMS, specifically designed to meet more complex workplace needs. Moodle Workplace includes added functionality to reflect your organizational structure, automate workflows, integrate with your company's HR or other existing systems, provide personalized and accessible training, and much more. It allows organizations to further align learning goals with business objectives.

Moodle Workplace is supported by the nonprofit Moodle HQ and is exclusively available through Premium Certified Moodle Partners like eThink.

Learn about the unique benefits of Moodle Workplace for organizational learning in our Moodle Workplace LMS guide.

View Guide



In conclusion, we hope this guide helps making the transition to remote workplace learning simpler and smoother. Incorporating digital learning into your workplace learning strategy allows you to provide more engaging learning experiences as well as future-proof your training programs. The latest advancements in eLearning technology allow you to incorporate multiple styles of learning while tracking the success and engagement of each approach you take, ultimately making L&D an effective way to positively impact business bottom line.

If you're ready to begin building a sustainable remote workplace learning program for your organization, request a demo to speak with one of our eLearning experts about the possibilities available with eThink's opensource LMS solutions.





About éThink

eThink is a Certified Premium Moodle Partner and Platinum Totara Partner, enabling us to offer customizable solutions for the world's most popular opensource LMS platforms to meet your organization's unique eLearning needs. Our team of experts fully-manage your online learning environment and take care of every aspect including implementation, hosting, management, customization, integration, and support so you can meet your specific organizational and educational goals faster than ever.

Learn more about why eThink is the leading open-source eLearning solutions provider and how we empower organizations to maximize their learning initiatives.



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