



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### Up and About with eLearning

The retail industry has had a poor success rate in curbing its turnover problem. In certain companies, turnover will actually reach 100 percent every once in a while. Given that most retail jobs are part-time, low-paying positions that attract college and even high school students, retention seems almost impossible. Because of this high turnover rate, training an employee well also can seem impossible. By the time an associate is through his training cycle, he or she is ready to leave. Unfortunately, it definitely does not make business sense to place untrained employees on the floor.

Luckily, there is good news for retailers with a turnover problem. Creating an elearning program that trains retail associates and that the average associate can easily absorb can reduce training cycles for retail associates.

#### Has It Finally Dawned?

The scene is the same in practically all retail outlets. Every few months a number of associates leave and are replaced by newbies who need training from the word go. While the intellectual capital resides in a few seniors, they too eventually leave, creating a vacuum of knowledge and skills.

Such frequent employee flight makes training a tough challenge. *"If my average associate stays on for six months but the regular training cycle takes four months that is an issue"*. explains the senior vice-president of marketing and sales for one retail company. *"But with e-learning, if I can get a team up and running in six weeks that makes them much more productive"*.

#### The 'e-Advantage'

HR executives in the retail industry have just woken to the positive relationship between e-learning and retention. According to Gartner Inc., a research organization, nearly 50 percent of retailers are now open to the idea of installing Internet connections to access and run e-learning programs.

As e-learning matures, the most important products of the industry are the building blocks of a program and not complete courses. These building blocks are small 'bits of instruction' that put a participant through 15-20 minutes of study. These standard blocks can be mixed and grouped to create a customized course, making learning more relevant and topical.

To a learner, bite-sized chunks of instruction are easier to learn, revise and update. Learning through this mode is definitely much quicker than in classroom-based learning. As e-learners, participants can mix and match learning objects to create a course that best addresses individual needs. Another great advantage of delivering instruction in small digestible bits is that it keeps the retail associate more on the floor than in classrooms.

#### Course Details



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One large organization has created an elearning program that resembles a subway map, where each segment represents a different training station. Each station branches off into different training topics. No segment is more than seven minutes long and exposes the associate to basic knowledge in given topics. Segments are updated as soon as new products enter the fray. A prime advantage of online training is that its content can be customized with little effort.

### **Additional Features**

Another appealing aspect of e-learning is that it caters to the learning needs of a diverse workforce. One store's culture may vastly differ from the other. In such cases, addressing diverse learning needs effectively is near impossible. eLearning can solve these problems by providing a uniform training package that can be modified by each store to meet its particular needs.

At the end of the training, associates should be asked feedback. If associates say that training is too complex or confusing, it should be modified.

Be serious about e-learning. An employee who attends a classroom session is rarely disturbed for routine matters, whereas an employee learning at his desktop gets interrupted frequently. Hanging a professionally made "*Do Not Disturb*" sign when an employee is online helps

The big elearning benefit to the retail industry is reduced training cycles. With turnover problems breathing down their necks, retailers cannot have it better.