



# 9 Vital Practices to Develop and Deliver Effective VILT Your Students Will Love



# Introduction

# 72%

of companies using hybrid classrooms report they are "somewhat" or "very" ineffective at conducting them?

You're already familiar with it, but it's continuing to change the way we deliver corporate virtual training and learning.

[Virtual instructor-led training](#) (as well as hybrid learning) – also known as VILT – is increasingly gaining fame in becoming the hottest trend in virtual training, with surveys showing a clear shift from other training methods for the past 7 years.

But if this method is indeed the best virtual training technology has to offer, why is it that over 72% of companies using hybrid classrooms report they are "somewhat" or "very" ineffective at conducting them?

Almost a decade since [VILT](#) was introduced into the training world, it seems safe to conclude that there is a right way and a wrong way to utilize this technology. Research tells us that in order to bridge the gap between this training model's potential and its effectiveness on the ground, VILT courses must be specifically designed for the unique characteristics of the virtual environment and implemented thoroughly across all stakeholders in the organization.

To that end, this eBook offers valuable guidance on how to effectively utilize VILT technology in your organization – along with 9 practical techniques to maximize its added value.

# Here's what we know

We know that the two main causes of failure to conduct an effective VILT course are: boredom and distractions. Yes, the two old monstrous nemeses of virtual training.

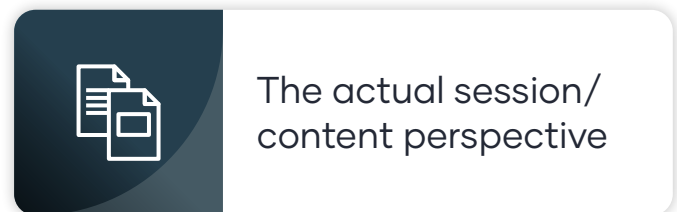
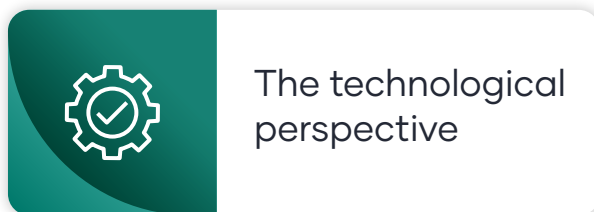
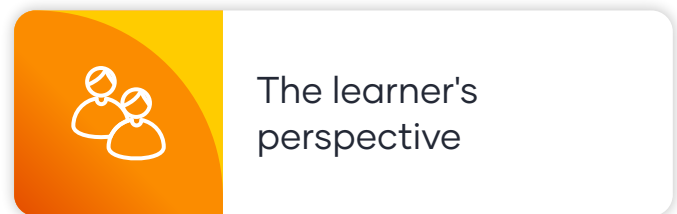
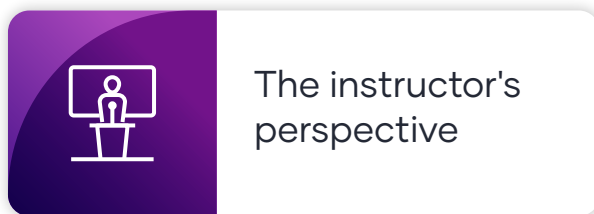
We even know the best ways to defeat these hurdles: engaging the trainees and conducting interactive communication. We actually have a few webinars on this topic which you can see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Despite our knowledge, however, companies continue to miss the great potential. In fact, 80% of companies reporting ineffective VILT say it's mostly due to difficulty engaging the trainees and not fully utilizing the technology's functionalities. The focus now is how to maximize the great potential in VILT and avoid "death by PowerPoint", which to this day is the terror of every training program instructor or developer.

That's why we've assembled here the best practices for virtual instructor-led training from 4 different perspectives:

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of companies reporting ineffective VILT say it's mostly due to difficulty engaging the trainees and not fully utilizing the technology's functionalities.



# From the instructor's perspective



It's a common misconception in organizations that content trumps the instructor in VILT. However, the true value of hybrid instructor-led training is found in a combination of the priceless presence of the instructor, along with the convenience and benefits of the virtual classroom. If we leave one of those components out of the equation, we won't make the best out of this technology.

The live and direct communication between the instructor and students is what keeps the classroom from becoming just another e-learning session. A good instructor is still vital for effective training, just like in the traditional instructor-led classroom. There's just no replacement for the instructor's ability to assist the students with "over the shoulder" view.

From the instructor's perspective, 2 helpful practices will maximize VILT's effectiveness:

## 1 Equip your trainer with these key soft skills:

- Presentation techniques
- Classroom management methods

These often include communication, listening and audience-reading skills. Many companies focus on training their instructors mainly on professional skills, such as sales or IT, while the real challenge these instructors face is keeping their audience engaged.

To conduct effective VILT, you don't need the best sales or IT professional in the company - you need a brilliant instructor. And that is what makes all the difference; maintaining the qualities that make a good face-to-face instructor is what keeps the classroom interested, engaged and focused, rather than staring numbly at the screen.

## 2 Train your instructors on the virtual technology

For instructors to embrace the hybrid delivery method, they need to stop fearing the technology and, instead, get to know it. Most VILT platforms are fairly simple, and it is critical for instructors to know their way around the technology for the training to be effective.

Teach your instructors how to navigate the virtual classroom and utilize the interactive features; show them where to go for technical help and how to engage remote participants.

Most VILT platforms offer live feedback capabilities between the instructor and participants, but in order for the instructor to answer questions in real time and offer participants immediate clarity on content, the instructor must feel comfortable with the technology.



# From the learner's perspective



Another way to fight learning boredom, and minimize distractions, is by attending to the trainee's learning environment.

Granted, one of the main advantages of using VILT is the very idea that participants can be located anywhere and learn simultaneously, regardless of where their training staff or peers are located. But as opposed to e-learning, in which the trainee learns individually at any time, the virtual instructor-led training model maintains the essence of the traditional classroom – in which trainees and instructors are simultaneously and actively communicating participants.

In practical terms, this means that VILT participants need a semi-classroom environment to properly participate in the session.



# From the technology's perspective



In order for VILT to effectively answer a company's specific needs, each training program should incorporate different relevant characteristics of the hybrid ILT technology. There are, however, some commonalities across companies and industries for maximizing the benefits of this unique technology.

## 4 Take advantage of VILT's available benefits

Surveys show the most effective use of VILT included these top-priority characteristics:

- Repurposing training content
- Audio and visual synchronicity
- Recording/archiving training
- Screen sharing
- Pre/post training materials.



# From the actual session/content perspective



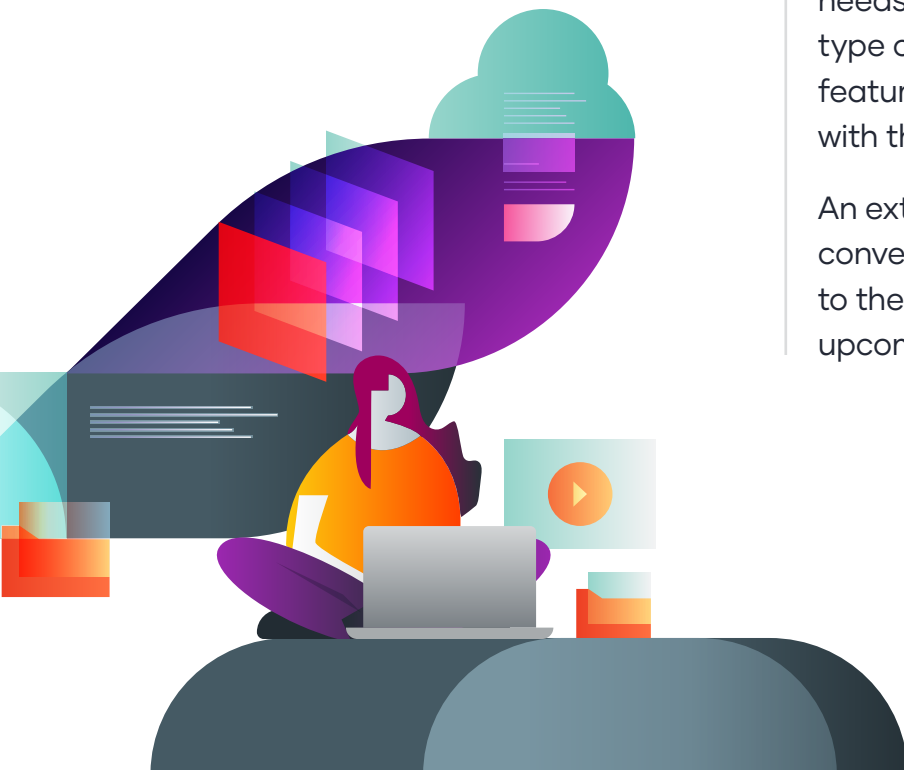
Engaging participants is a major challenge for VILT instructors. In fact, it is the greatest perceived limitation of VILT and the most often-cited difficulty among respondents who view their companies as not very effective at using a VILT solution.

Instructors must combine every trick in the book to create an active learning experience, and they should consistently touch base with each and every participant. The good news is VILT actually provides the instructor with multiple ways to overcome this reported difficulty, by making proper use of its unique properties.

## 5 Adjust the content

First things first - adjust the type of content to be effectively conveyed through VILT technology. Materials meant for a lecture, or even an online webinar, will simply not do the job for VILT. The content needs to be designed specifically for this type of training, to incorporate all relevant features and properly engage the audience with the right interactive activities.

An extensive discussion of methods for converting traditional instructor-led training to the VILT classroom will be the topic of an upcoming eBook, so stay tuned.





## 6 Keep class size small

Most research shows that the most effective hybrid ILT courses were conducted with a class size of less than 20 participants. This may or may not be inheritance from traditional classroom training, where size matters dramatically. Either way it's clear that the fewer the participants, the better they interact. And that's the main goal of VILT, which inevitably brings us to our next best practice.



## 7 Implement interactive activities in the training program to provide a hands-on experience

One of the reasons that hybrid ILT is potentially the best available virtual training method today is its ability to leverage peer-to-peer learning. Interacting with other participants has proven to add value to the training experience, keeping the students highly engaged.

Effective tools to enhance collaboration and interaction among participants in VILT are chat, polling, whiteboarding, Q&A, peer discussions, file sharing, quizzes and role playing exercises.

And interactive activities don't necessarily end when the session ends; instructors should also use social networks to provide instructions and materials before and after each session and keep trainees engaged offline.

Yet another aspect defining an effective VILT is the vital interaction between the participants and the instructor. The live feedback is at the very core of this type of training and serves as a major differentiator between VILT and any other online virtual learning methods.

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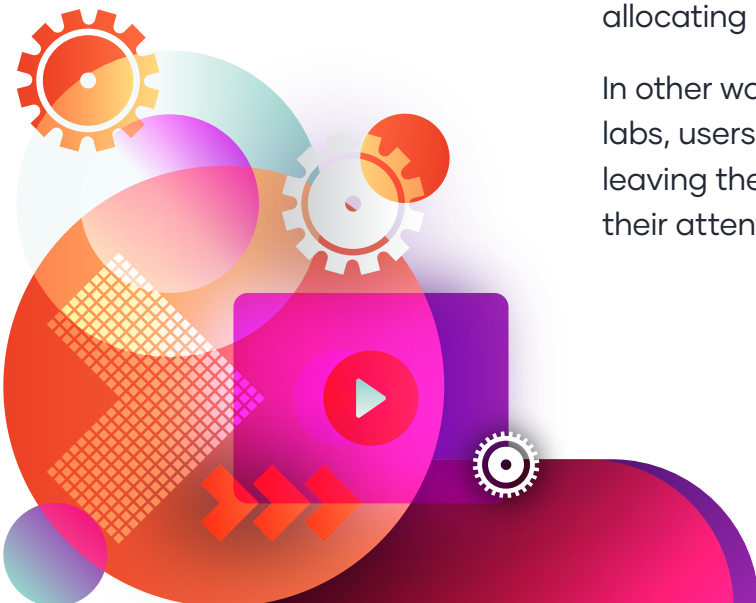


Let's take a moment to consider just how crucial interactive VILT is for corporate training.

A good example of a common use case for VILT is IT training courses. In this case, merely teaching the concepts in a lecture-like format will not give the students the hands-on experience they need. To give participants a real-life experience, they need a real-life IT environment in which to practice the concepts they've learned – that is, a virtual training lab. The virtual training lab can utilize interactivity to keep the trainees engaged, with classroom chat, over-the-shoulder assistance, the ability for real-time environment sharing, and more. Trainees literally learn by doing with constant communication and live feedback from peers and instructors.

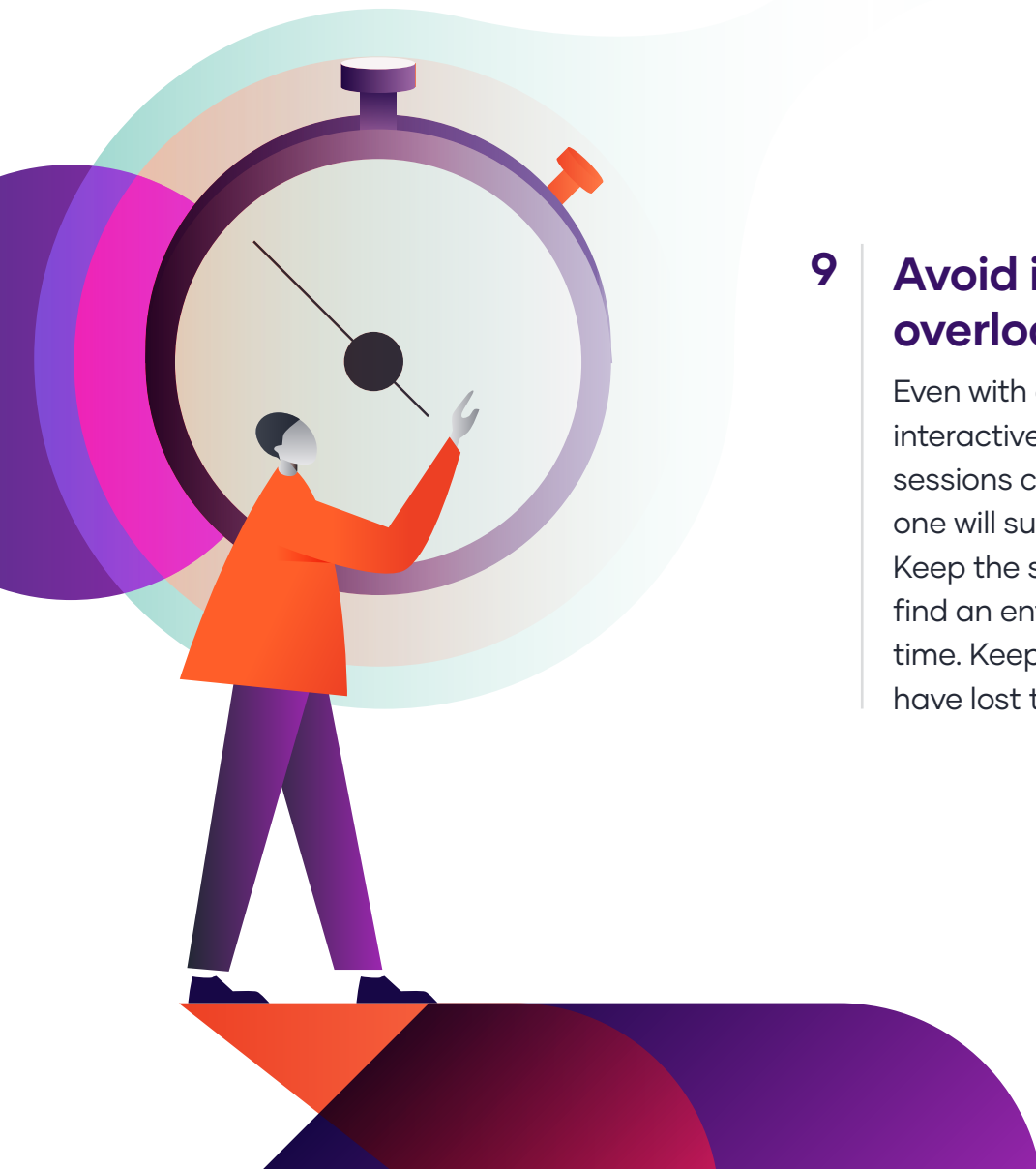
As such, [virtual training labs](#) can be one of the most effective delivery methods VILT technology has to offer. And, depending on the capabilities of your virtual lab provider, you can utilize templates to easily assemble comprehensive environments within minutes, thus eliminating the need to invest in infrastructure and dramatically decreasing the need for IT support and time spent setting up training environments and allocating resources.

In other words, thanks to interactive virtual training labs, users can gain a hands-on experience without leaving their seats, and instructors are able to keep their attention and retention high.



## 8 Utilize multimedia content

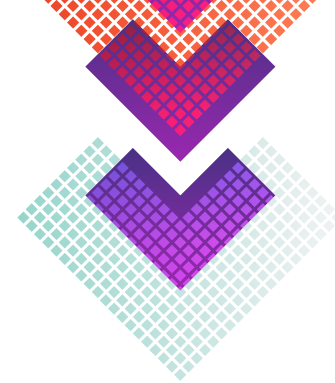
Use varied multimedia to keep participants interested in what they see and hear. Arouse their senses with everything you have to catch their attention. This should be possible by simply having the option to add an extra tab within a learner environment to access only specific content on the internet.



## 9 Avoid information overload

Even with extensive multimedia and interactive engagement, long sessions can still be exhausting. No one will survive a series of those. Keep the sessions short and you will find an enthusiastic audience every time. Keep them long and you'll have lost them at "hello."

# To wrap it up



As has been widely established, the mass majority of companies are growing their use of VILT. But studies show that only about 20% of them consider their VILT courses effective.

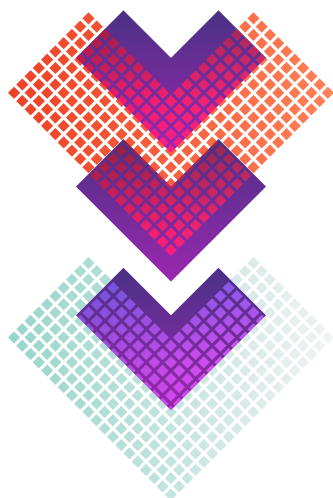
There's no doubt that VILT has changed the [virtual training](#) world, and its benefits are clear: upgrading employees' skill sets, boosting cooperation between colleagues and improving overall expertise – all in simultaneous sessions conducted around the world. But there's a surprising gap between the potential this method holds and its actual success on the ground.

There are a number of reasons the account for this gap, the most common being a lack of VILT expertise from the instructor's perspective, distractions around the participant environment and more. However, the single most difficult challenge continues to be engagement, engagement, engagement. It seems VILT's biggest nemesis today is still "death by PowerPoint."

This constitutes the major hurdle to effective VILT delivery. Because even with no distractions, a classroom-like space and the most impressive visual features – virtual "millennial" learners are by default inclined to drift away from content. Funny thing is, VILT is actually the best method to attract participants' attention. It is only a matter of learning the best practices to maximize its benefits:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Equip instructors with key soft skills                               | 5. Adjust the content to fit the technology |
| 2. Train them on the technology   | 6. Keep class-size small                    |
| 3. Set strict guidelines for a disturbance-free participant environment | 7. Implement interactive activities         |
| 4. Utilize the unique characteristics of VILT                           | 8. Use multimedia content                   |
|   | 9. Avoid informational overload             |

# What should you do next



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This comprehensive approach to developing a VILT training program in your organization is vital to making the most out of this groundbreaking technology and maximize its true added value.

So, in developing your VILT program, make sure you cover all 4 perspectives (instructor, student, technology, and content) – all the way from training the instructor to engaging the student.

## Looking to maximize virtual training in your organization?

[Talk to us.](#)

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