# Activating Learning within an Organization

# Activating Learning within an Organization

**As organizations invest in continuing education and training, make sure you activate learning the right way: with active learning.**

## The Importance of Activating Learning within an Organization

Businesses face serious risk of losing employees or lacking critical skills. In order for your organization to remain competitive in today's digital economy you must provide learning opportunities to staff that are transformational.

Activating learning within your organization is said to "facilitate the market growth" for the next 10 years. More and more companies are investing heavily in creating a culture of learning and encouraging executive education in the workplace. In fact, the FMI's 2021 report has found that the market for corporate education will exceed $37.8 billion by the close of 2021.

Why? It improves employee retention and productivity. In 2021, 94% of surveyed employees would remain with their organization longer if the company invested in activating learning. So those who *are* investing, are benefitting.

However, not all learning is created equal.



True organizational transformation is achieved by activating the right kind of learning: **active learning.**

Active learning facilitates better outcomes and knowledge retention. With active learning, employees can access situations, adapt, and apply new skills to achieve company goals.

**The U.S will account for over 76.4% of the market share of organizational learning in North America through 2031.**

### Three Reasons Activating Learning Transforms Organizational Skills

1. Active learning is transferable across multiple organizational contexts and situations. Executive leaders should think about many ways to give their employees new skills. By activating learning, knowledge can be applied by adding new skills, allowing employees to deliver new capabilities within the workplace, and adding new tools to the organization at large. Workers with better knowledge are more valuable to an organization than those with tactile skills alone, so training and ongoing learning should be a priority.

2. Active learning results in subject matter expertise. Easy company tutorials full of quirky training videos from ten years ago or ongoing education in the form of 300 PowerPoint slides is unlikely to increase tangible skills. Research in recent years indicates that watching demos, tutorials, or videos online does not significantly drive tangible skill acquisition for your staff. Learning with practical applications solidifies information and improves the success of reskilling and upskilling.

3.  ==Active learning teaches employees to perform tasks independently. Active learning necessitates ample practice and as the adage goes, *practice makes perfect*. Active learning increases retention.== Once employees have knowledge on a subject, they can make better decisions, drive your company strategy forward, and execute plans. This improves the long-term value of the company.
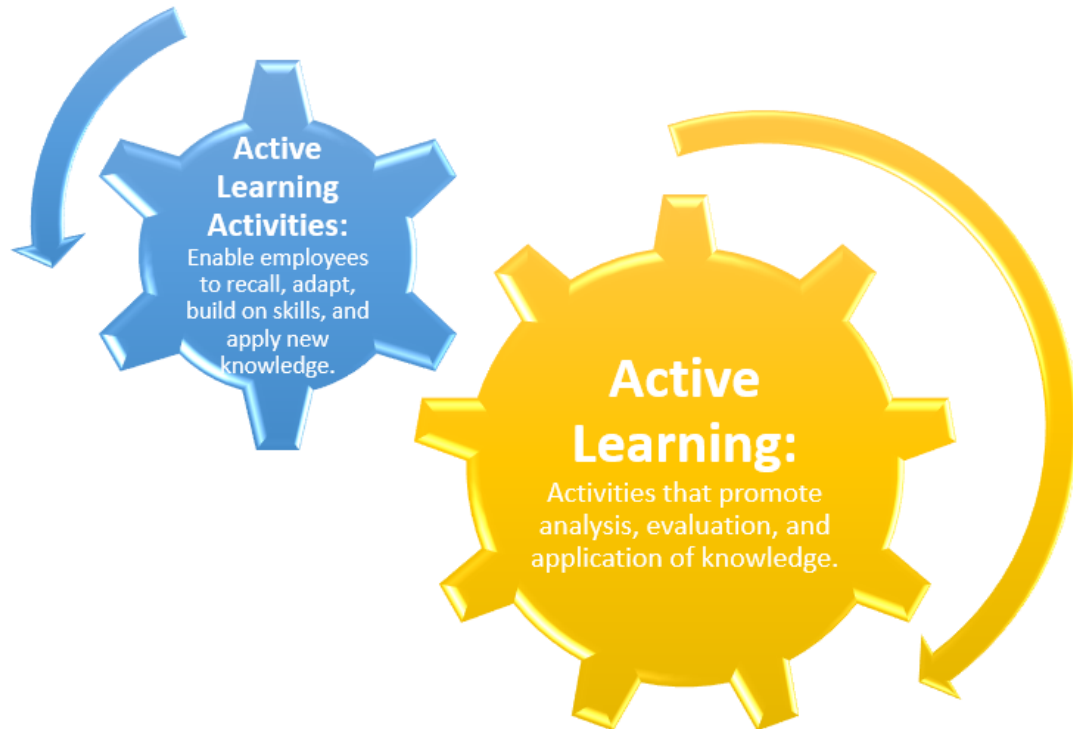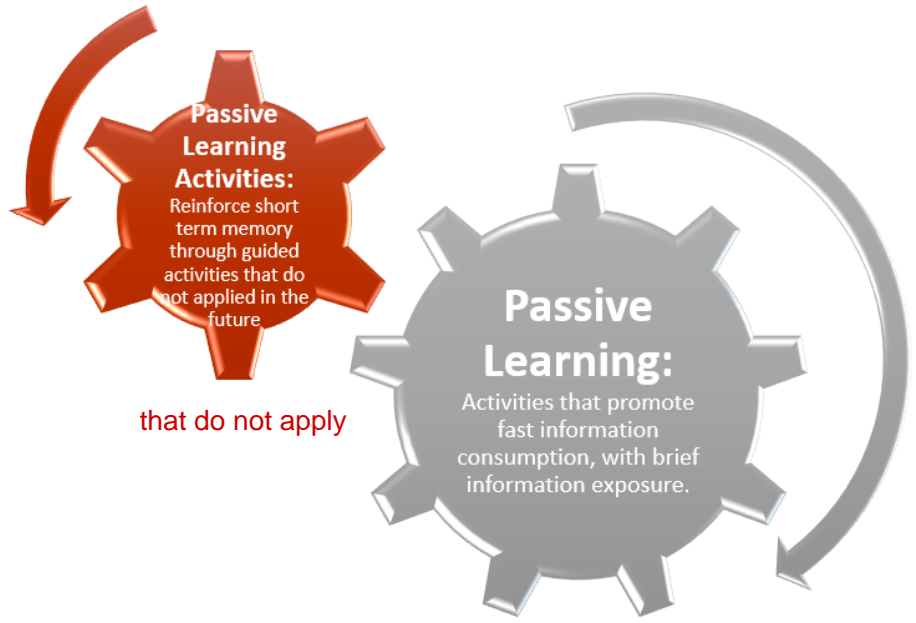
A sustainable workforce requires employees who can adapt on the fly, learn from their mistakes, and translate their skills into business success. This requires active learning.

### *Active Learning versus Passive Learning*

Active learning is an approach that couples learning with applications, hands-on experiences, feedback, and reflection.

**Active Learning Activities:** Enable employees to recall, adapt, build on skills, and apply new knowledge.

**Active Learning:** Activities that promote analysis, evaluation, and application of knowledge.

Transferable knowledge to different situations and contexts

Helps learners retain and build upon skills at all level of your organization

Allows employees to independently perform tasks without executive guidance

Encodes new capabilities long term for your organization

Cultivates subject matter expertise

Passive learning introduces your staff to the most basic information on a subject (think: death by PowerPoint) and then moves on. Passive learning leaves a huge chasm between training or courses and actionable abilities. Non-traditional types of active learning, on demand short courses, are helping cultivate lifelong skills for employees.

**Passive Learning Activities:** Reinforce short term memory through guided activities that do not applied in the future

that do not apply

**Passive Learning:** Activities that promote fast information consumption, with brief information exposure.

Develops a surface level understanding (only "the basics")

Learners cannot repeat tasks from memory but must look up steps.

Learners cannot transferable knowledge to different situations or contexts within the organization

cannot transfer knowledge

*The Executive Education Advisor*

## The Learning Loop

The central component to activating learning within your organization is applying the learning loop.



## The Learning Loop



This is a system where:

1. Your employees gain knowledge
2. They apply that knowledge to a situation
3. They receive feedback on their performance
4. They reflect on what they have learned
5. This process gets repeated

There is no specific period for a learning loop. It can be short or long. Whatever the time, it should just include a full cycle to ensure the knowledge and skills acquired is not fleeting.

Tip: *Activating learning within your organization means facilitating learning with creative and hybrid courses and training. Employees who sit through hours of video lectures may soon forget most of what they saw or heard during videos whereas employees who review shorter chunks of videos followed by interactive projects and assessments are more likely to retain that knowledge long term. This is especially true if you force them to apply the knowledge to the projects, get feedback on their application, and have discussion areas to reflect on lessons learned.*

**2021 saw a significant increase in reskilling and upskills.**

## Competence Not Confidence

In the world of modern learning, employees can easily read an eBook, listen to a lecture, or watch a video on any topic and claim to "know" something. But knowing something, being confident about having watched three YouTube tutorials is much different than having the competence to actively apply that knowledge.

**The Executive**
*Education*
**Advisor**

A recent study found that people who just watch others perform skills or teach instructional videos *believe* they can do the skill as well, even if they have never practiced it. Actual abilities, however, did not improve statistically just by watching alone.

## *How to Incorporate Active Learning*

*Shorter courses, one week or one month, are expected to remain the most in demand form of executive education, accounting for 46.3% of the global demand through the close of 2021.*

At the start of 2021, 87% of companies worldwide had identified a skills gap within their organization. These skills gaps are often critical to the company, like digital skills and cybersecurity.

Investing in upskilling and reskilling for your current employees is particularly important for high-stakes jobs. Bad training and an inactive learning environment can have a negative impact on the reputation of your organization and the health of your business.

Digital skills represent a significant skills gap for 2022 which is why hybrid learning models that encourage your employees to gain hard and soft skills while concurrently familiarizing themselves with more digital technologies is the most useful way to activate learning in your organization.

So how do you effectively activate learning to upskill and reskill employees?
Video is one of the most preferred ways of teaching and consuming, but transferring skills requires learners to perform their newly acquired skills. Passive reading, watching, or listening is insufficient and results in too much confidence over competence.

What does an active learning environment look like? Active learning uses techniques like:

- Writing or journal reflections
- Discussions
- Problem solving
- Evaluations
- Analysis
- Applications

*The Executive Education Advisor*

All these techniques are active learning techniques which help employees learn new skills and apply them.

Not sure where to start? Use these tools to find techniques you might incorporate into your organization:

1. Audit a course. Use things like open enrollment at local universities and colleges. Try online courses. Paying top leaders to test programs and courses locally and online will give you a feel for what active learning techniques work best and which institutions make good partners.
2. Use third parties. If this seems too time consuming or expensive, executive education organizations like zSchool can guide you toward reliable institutions with reputable active learning programs already in place.
3. Review the syllabus. You do not necessarily have to take a course to look at the syllabus and see the expectations. Deliverables might take the form of projects, group collaborations, open-ended discussions, weekly journals, and more.

## What Techniques to Integrate

The Learning Loop is a key feature here. When your organization wants to know what active learning techniques are most effective use that loop:

- **LEARN:** Learning can happen via text, video, or audio but learners *must* be asked to recall or retrieve knowledge from every segment or module in an active fashion, or they will gain confidence, not competence.
- **APPLY**: Employees in your organization must demonstrate a process or apply it in a situation like a lab, rather than just copy and fill in a questionnaire or a form. Valuable learning techniques ask participants to compare and contrast the concepts they have learned or predict the outcome of fake situations rather than answer multiple choice questions.
- **REFLECT:** Well-designed courses will give regular feedback to your employees. This does not mean just sitting down and giving criticism. It means knowledge checks, peer learning, group discussions, and quizzes. These all activate reflection on newly acquired information.
- **FEEDBACK:** Do not just prompt your employees to reflect on ideas, but rather, debate them, connect the concepts learned in the course, and even anticipate how the knowledge can be applied to your company. More advanced learners like executives will benefit the most from open-ended discussions.

Overall, the best activities and platforms will ask your employees to:
1. Write about the topics, and discuss them
2. Reflect on things they have learned
3. Connect what they learned to their professional lives
4. Recall the information they learned before
5. Compare and contrast ideas
6. Create something new using the skills learned

**THE EXECUTIVE EDUCATION ADVISOR CAN HELP YOU LEARN HOW TO ACTIVATE LEARNING WITIN YOUR ORGANIZATION. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ACTIVE LEARNING, PLEASE VISIT WWW.ZSCHOOL.COM.**

Workplace Skills
https://www.thehrdigest.com/the-big-shift-demand-for-future-work-skills-in-2021/

Digital Skills Gap
https://blog.multiverse.io/digital-skills-gap-2022-everything-you-need-to-know-to-stay-ahead-of-the-competition/

Confidence Study
https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797617740646#:~:text=Six%20experiments%20(N%20%3D%202%2C225),%2C%20too%20(Experiment%201).

Active Learning
https://www.forbes.com/sites/anantagarwal/2019/07/09/three-reasons-why-active-learning-will-drive-the-workforce-of-tomorrow/#5d5c28e88f93

**REFERENCES**

2021 LinkedIn Learning Report
https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report

Videos and Skills Research
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180308085358.htm

FMI 2021 Report
https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/executive-education-program-market

Skills Gap
https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/coronavirus-leading-through-the-crisis/charting-the-path-to-the-next-normal/mind-the-skills-gap

*The Executive Education Advisor*