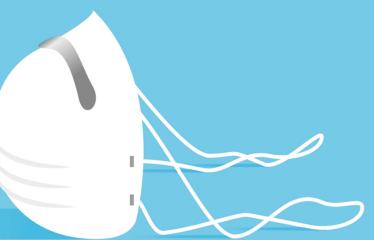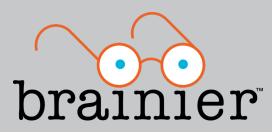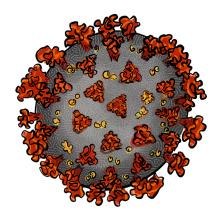# brainier™

# eLearning Through a Pandemic

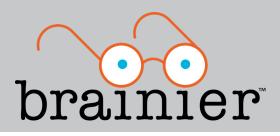## A 2020 "To-Do" List for Learning & Development Programs

# *Though we are trying to avoid hyperbole...*

    ... the hard truth is that the world of work has forever changed due to the COVID-19 crisis. When we eventually find a reprieve from this period of social distancing, we'll look at the business landscape through a different lens. At Brainier, we've been as busy as ever. Though the setting may vary, the need for learning continues and Brainier is a SaaS-based company capable of working from anywhere.

    Fortunately, the infrastructure of eLearning is also predisposed to accommodating a working-from-home setting, and our customers are taking advantage of this opportunity. The traffic across all customer sites has been stable week over week, new clients continue to come in, and there has been zero disruption of service.

    Throughout this unusual period, we have had many conversations with our customers, read (more than a few) articles/blogs/news stories, and have taken some time to collect our thoughts on the future of learning and development, and the workplace as a whole.

## The New "Normal"

While the "safer at home" measures are devastating for many businesses, especially many branches of the service industry, the importance of business continuity is paramount. The urgency to adapt to the new working conditions may be one positive effect of this crisis.

Quickly, we saw many organizations respond by enabling remote workstations for many employees, perhaps making that final step toward a "digital transformation" of the business. Many employees saw a tidal wave of new or under-used technology to assist their transition to a remote workspace. Utilizing new technology and offering flexible working conditions is now the new "normal" for many organizations.
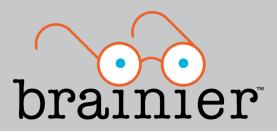
Many organizations are finding themselves finally doing in **3 days** what they've been planning for **4 years**.

## Fast, Free, and RELEVANT Learning Content

Just as we have learned what exactly is an "essential employee" in this crisis, we have also seen how important organizational learning is to business function. Those employees still performing their duties in the workplace often require instruction on best practices to keep people (especially themselves) safe during this outbreak. Anyone interacting in social settings or using shared physical resources like machines, tools, or even door handles was likely coached on how to reduce the risk of contagion. Everyone from medical professionals to food delivery associates are on the frontline of stopping the spread of the virus. Delivering eLearning content about keeping people from contracting the virus is potentially saving lives today.

While learning content like this was already in use for many Brainier customers, we saw a few content partners step up and rapidly create and distribute content specific to this pandemic and do it all for free. In the last 2 weeks of March, 40% (and climbing) of Brainier customers took steps to deploy learning content relevant to the crisis. Many customers responded by transitioning their instructor-led training to virtual ILT events within The Brainier LMS as this was often the safest way of continuing their learning objectives.

3

## A Return to Normalcy

Many people have surely envisioned a return to normalcy. A version of an "all clear" is given and people return to the workplace en masse. However, the inherent risks of a shared workspace are impossible to ignore. For many who have compromised immune systems or are in contact with someone of that ilk, the return is not so easy. Accommodating remote employees will likely be an ongoing option among organizations that place a high priority on their people.

After "social distancing" ends, we will all likely enjoy a whirlwind few days making up for lost time at our favorite restaurants, live entertainment, or even just the gym.

## But, Some Will *Stay* Remote

A result of this pandemic could be a widespread increase in workplace flexibility as we're bound to see an increase in employees desiring to work remotely. A study conducted roughly a year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic found that 80% of workers would turn down a job that didn't have flexible working options. Offering workplace flexibility, at least for now, may be a healthy (pardon the pun) compromise as people evaluate their risk of returning to a potentially dangerous workplace.

Another unknown is the effect on productivity and the number of people that simply might prefer being off-site. As this crisis drags on, more data become available to analytically compare productivity levels. A consequence of this situation might be an unexpected lift in productivity as a 21st century workforce takes shape.
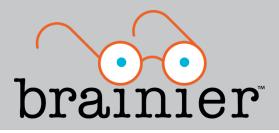
## Learning for Remote Employees

Learning leaders are once again challenged to tailor their L&D programs to a changing workforce. Meeting the learner "where they are" is the new reality to reach some members, both literally and figuratively. Supporting a learning objective through virtual ILT has never been more accessible thanks to the sudden influx of new communication technologies rolled out to the remote workforce. The technology required to host webinars and upload learning content, (embedded in The Brainier LMS currently) is increasingly a standard feature for the modern remote worker.

**Traditional, instructor-led training is going to be on ice for a while. And for employees that are 100% remote, ILT is impossible.**

**That's why the inclusion of a virtual instructor-led training session is an obvious recourse.**

## Leveraging That Remote Learner

One advantage to engaging a remote learner is the potential they may have to offer a different perspective on best practices or even simply advancing a learning objective. It could be as basic as the physical separation from their peers that influences their experience in finding success in their duties. And, sharing their findings on best practices could help to innovate for the team and the organization, as a whole. It seems too often that processes go unchallenged for far longer than need be because the mentality of "that's the way we've always done it" may be pervasive in an organization. Leveraging the potential of the remote learner could potentially avoid a group-think approach and lead to process optimization.

# A 2020 To-Do List:

One thing that we have learned from this quarantine crisis is the importance of having a central hub for all learning. Both learning leaders and learners need a home base so that when physical distance is necessary, there is less confusion and frustration. Here is a punch list of course corrections to make before the next quarantine crisis.

## IMMEDIATE CHANGES

### a.   Access for all members

*An obvious response, of course, but it needs to be stated.*

Straight away, Brainier support fielded a huge number of requests to add users to their L&D programs. In a time of crisis, communication is critical and everyone in the organization needs access to learning. In the case of workers on the frontline of COVID-19, timely access to knowledge on how to protect themselves and others, and stop the spread of contagion was an immediate need.

### b.   Learning Continuity

Shifting learning modalities to an eLearning delivery method is probably the safest option for everyone in a working-from-home crisis like this. It's time to incorporate virtual instructor-led training where possible. This way, learning goals are disrupted as little as possible.

**brainier**

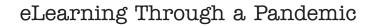## LONG RANGE PLANNING

### a.   Inclusion, Inclusion, Inclusion

Future learning objectives will need to be even more inclusive for all members, especially those working remotely. This crisis has taught us that learning plays a crucial role in the communication process during times of crisis.

The need for leadership has been an important issue during this pandemic. Brainier support has heard countless stories from our customers of how effective business and learning leaders can be in a remote work setting. This is a time to look within an organization to develop the next group leaders, regarless of how they may choose to work.
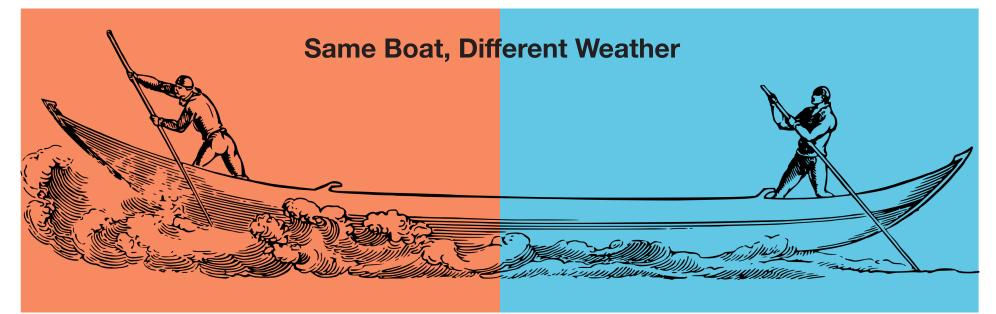
### b.   Cross-train, Up-skill, Re-skill

Before everyone returns to "business as usual", many businesses are seeing a bit of a slow down, and for some it will sadly mean a reduction in force. Take the opportunity to both 1.) cross-train members of staff to assist other teams that may be shorthanded, and 2.) create a library of learning content to help new team members trying to quickly learn ways to help.

For some organizations, it may be time to invest in the re-skilling and up-skilling of employees to adapt to the new business world. The precedent has been set that this type of work-from-home crisis is on the table of possibilities for future pandemics. The workplace is in transition yet again, being prepared for it is a choice.

## Same Boat, Different Weather

A metaphor we keep hearing in the media is that "we're all in the same boat" in this COVID-19 pandemic. And, it's true, as we're all playing a part in the spread of the virus (or the containment). Though we all are disrupted in some way, many people in the proverbial "boat" are experiencing different weather. The range of experience during this crisis may feel like a storm for some and a light breeze for others.

For our friends and colleagues in the industries hit the hardest, like the healthcare and service industries, we are doing what we can to get vital information their way to stay as safe as possible. For many of us working from home for the first time, we're offering learning content on how to be successful in this new working environment. And, while no one knows for certain how this situation will resolve itself, there will always be a need for ongoing learning in any organization and Brainier is a stable partner to help with your learning goals.

Stay safe.
And let's come through this a little better prepared.

# About **Brainier**

Brainier is a new kind of learning and development company. Brainier was conceived from the ability to identify the trends in enterprise learning and designing technology and services to help enterprise-level organizations keep pace with them.

The Brainier LMS helps your business achieve breakthrough results through better enterprise eLearning that will educate engage, and empower your employees.

**Brainier.**
educate. engage. empower.

Learn more at brainier.com