



10 Questions You Need to Ask Before Buying Online Training

VIVID
learning systems

Essential questions you'll want to ask any provider before investing in online safety training, and honest answers from the people who sell and support it.

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We've Got Your Back

If you're interested in moving your safety and compliance training online, you're on the smart track. You already know that online training can solve a series of common problems for organizations, like centralizing training records, saving time and money, and simplifying reporting for compliance. That's what training automation does—it makes life easier for safety and training professionals like you, and delivers a better experience to your workforce.

Yet online training isn't the right solution for every organization (as much as we'd like that to be the case) and it isn't a minor investment for some. To move your training program online is to make a fundamental change in the way your organization operates, and that's a big challenge for groups resistant to change. Well, we've got your back.

Drawing from expertise across our company, we've compiled a set of essential questions, answers, and important considerations for anyone out there shopping around for an online training solution. From the CEO

on down to the front desk, we asked our people to think not about our success stories, but about our failures, and try to explain what crossover clients wish they would've known before making a purchase and what we've learned after 20+ years in the business.

In other words, this is the advice we'd give to a family member if they couldn't do business with us. The intent here is to take you beyond the obvious; covering 'the importance of setting program goals', while useful, is kind of a no-brainer.

Sincerely, we hope this guide helps you make a more informed buying decision, even if we don't 'do business' together.

Thanks for sharing a moment of your time with us.

Cheers.

Duane Tumlinson
Chief Operating Officer





#1: How much training do I really need and why?

“This is the most common pain point for our customers. Unless you’re an experienced Environmental Health & Safety pro with deep knowledge of state and federal occupational safety training standards, you’ll likely struggle to answer this basic question: who needs what training, why, and when?”

“The answer for all organizations is, ‘it depends’. That’s because the safety training you’re required to deliver is tied to hazard exposure and every organization is different. Now, some providers are not prepared to help you answer this question, so if you don’t have a clear understanding of the training topics required by law to cover your workforce, you may be at risk of buying more than you need or missing an important piece of compliance.”

“Customers hate that because it wastes money, erodes confidence in the training program, and draws complaints from managers for unnecessary time out of production. Figure this out first.”



Jill James

Chief Safety Officer

To find out which training you need, check out our [Free Training Needs Assessment](#).

#2: Will you help me sell this to my management team?

“Many of our core customers find themselves on an island within their organization. Safety and training professionals usually aren’t part of large teams, but are people who wear many hats within a company, responsible for compliance, training, all things safety related, and even workers compensation—one person, big job.”

“The safety role often finds itself at odds with organizational objectives, where they are looked at as the ‘safety cop’, someone who says ‘no’ or ‘you can’t do that’. Now even if they’re in a progressive organization that understands the value safety, they may still struggle with not having control over budget, resistance to safety investment, or outright indifference to safety goals.”

“To help customers in that situation, we’ve learned to serve as an advocate and provide support throughout the process, even getting our own executive team involved to establish those critical peer-to-peer relationships necessary to connect the value of the solution with their organization.”

Matt Hammer
Chief Executive Officer





#3: Will you provide a complete, detailed breakdown of all fees?

“Nothing is more frustrating for a customer than being quoted a price, only to find out after the fact that there’s an undiscussed fee involved, and having to go back to accounting and get authorization to cover additional, related expenses. Some providers have all sorts of upcharges and line items that suddenly materialize on the invoice and without prior discussion.”

“I’m talking about costs associated with implementation, data migration, training, and features you didn’t know you wanted or needed. We’ve learned that best thing we can do is to be completely upfront—as early as possible—about the total cost of the solution and what’s involved. Yes, we have to ask a lot of questions and sometimes customers need to do a little digging to turn up an answer, but in my experience, it is worth the effort.”



Scott Weeda
Account Executive

#4: Walk me through the implementation process, step by step—what’s involved?

“In the rush and excitement to get started with an online training program, sometimes sales people and customers will gloss over the details of implementation. Once you reach an agreement on a decision to go forward with a provider, it’s easy to jump to the next thing. Naturally, sales people and customers do this, often leaving important details behind.”

“And when on occasion this happens, I come in with a host of questions that haven’t been covered by either party, which slows down the process and causes frustration. But my job is to set our customers up for success from the start, so I’ll need to know about your software training needs, your number of administrative users, a firm date that works for solution rollout, and how best to connect your workforce with the appropriate training on an individual basis, etc. That’s not the small stuff!”

“Sometimes, customers don’t really know how to optimize the solution until they’re living with it and so I come back and make the necessary tweaks, tailor made. That’s okay, but we want to ensure we get as much right upfront to support internal adoption of the solution and minimize hiccups during the transition to online safety training because a good start is critical to happiness.”

Josh Hanson
Customer Service Champion



#5: Will you guarantee your training content is compliant?

“There’s a lot of online training content out there, some good, some bad. That’s okay because there is a product that fits every budget and not all needs are the same. Some customers want a cheap solution that covers the bare necessity of compliance, and others want to do it themselves with authoring software available in the marketplace. For those with resources, that’s fine, but by no means is that a small job. Remember that not all training content is created equal!”

“There are considerations around adult learning theory, degree of content interactivity, knowledge checks or testing, and instructional design expertise. And be sure to ask about training currency—does it match with recently updated state or federal occupational safety standards? Because if it doesn’t, then what are you really buying? If the training doesn’t match standards, you’re exposed to risk and liability, and more so in the event of an injury or accident. Plus, your workforce wouldn’t be receiving the most relevant training on hazard exposure. So when paying for any online training solution, ask about a compliance guarantee. That’s the least you deserve.”

Pam Sokey

Sales Development Representative



#6: How much work do I want to do with software on a day-to-day basis?

“Online training is really a two-part solution: courses + software = what you buy. And this is a big one because anyone who has been a working professional will have survived some sort of software switch relating to a business process, from accounting to human resources, etc. Now, how rarely have people raved about a software switch? It’s always a tough pill to swallow for organizations.”

“People don’t like change, especially when it slows them down, is hard to learn, breaks or has bugs, takes up a bunch of server space, and changes the way they work day-to-day. Because we spend so much of our time at work, it’s deeply personal. We’ve found that a small percentage of our clients are switching from a similar

Learning Management System (LMS), or cloud software application, which makes it easy for them to adjust. They’re best equipped to judge not only what they need from the software, but know their capacity for day-to-day engagement with it.”

“For those coming to online training completely cold, you want to start with something that is either dead simple to use or runs itself, and work with a provider who will handle the admin tasks that you may not have time for. Simple rule: If something’s difficult to use, it doesn’t get used. Make sure to test drive the entire online training solution before you buy, so remember to ask about a pilot program, and talk to peers about their experiences with online training.”

James Moss

Director of Sales & Marketing



#7: How will you help me after the sale, after we rollout the solution?

“To realize the benefits of online training, you want to make sure you’re partnered with a vendor that is working to help you get the most out of your solution for the life of your contract. We’ve learned valuable lessons of service from customers that’ve come to us from another provider or situation where they either couldn’t name their service rep, or were passed around so much that it was difficult to get the help they needed, like starting from scratch whenever they had a problem.”

“When we made the decision to match each customer with one dedicated ‘advocate’, it immediately resolved a bunch of issues we were having and increased our renewal rates

dramatically. That’s because setting up an online training program isn’t enough. You’ve got to have someone on the provider side who is tracking your course completion rates, coaching you along with suggestions for early reporting of employee progress, offering best practices that match your circumstances, helping you reconfigure setup, and notifying you when important updates happen, etc.”

“Think of it as a resource that evolves alongside your business; for that to happen someone on the provider side has to have your back. Remember that online training is supposed to make your life easier, not harder.”



Karla Lozano

Customer Service Advocate

#8: Will you connect me with a current client near my industry?

“At one level, this question is simply about doing enough diligence to feel comfortable moving forward with an online training provider. On another level, whomever the provider connects you with can say a lot about the way they do business. Obviously, if a sales person is reluctant to set you up with a current client, is dragging feet, or worse, balks and makes an excuse, that should raise an immediate ‘red flag’ for you.”

“Naturally, they’ll want to connect you with a raving fan who can’t say enough about your sales rep and the company’s training solution, but what you’re really looking for is an unbiased chance to do some discovery about the investment you’re making. It doesn’t matter who the provider is—and it’s a crowded industry field—

every substantial online training solution will present an unforeseeable challenge, a problem you and your provider won’t see coming until you’re living with it. That’s because each customer, each workforce, is unique.”

“However, you’ll learn much more if your provider willingly connects you with a recent acquired, current client, whose workforce demographic mirrors yours for hazard exposure, size, or industry. This is something I highly recommend asking for before signing an agreement. In fact, I wish we would’ve started doing it years ago. So if you’re reading this, promise me you’ll ask the question!”

Brooke Henderson
Account Executive



#9: How do I effectively use your training?

“I like to answer this question with a question: when you move to online training, will the training be mandatory, or will the training be optional? We’ve found that our most satisfied clients make completion of assigned courses mandatory, a condition of employment—it’s not a choice. And that’s for two important reasons.”

“First, if compliance training is optional, no one takes it. Second, compliance training is the bare minimum required by law. So if you buy an online training solution only to make it optional for your workforce, you’re probably throwing money away and you’d better be sure that you’ve got a handle on compliance. We will help you design a safety training plan that matches compliance for your workforce. Each organization has different needs, and many of our clients first assign several core courses that OSHA mandates all workers receive training on—that’s

training every employee needs—and then supplement those courses with training for other job specific duties, like commercial driving, ladder safety, or personal protective equipment (PPE), as needed.”

“A number of clients use our training for new employee orientation and annual refresher training. Many of these same clients use our training as an introduction to hands-on or site-specific training. For example, all employees that operate a forklift are required to take a formal forklift safety course (delivered online) before they get actual instruction about how to operate specific forklifts at a facility.”

Louis Jimerson
Client Care Specialist



#10: Show me the money! What's it all cost, and what's my Return-On-Investment?

“After looking around at our industry competitors, we consistently noticed an absence of pricing transparency—almost nobody publishes actual prices on their website! As someone who does comparison shopping online for all things business or personal, this was a disturbing realization. What's worse, is that we weren't doing it either!”

“There's a lot of fear surrounding pricing for online training because each customer is different, and providers don't want to scare somebody away from what's really more of an investment in safety, and sometimes not a small one. So that's when we decided to make it our mission to lead the online training industry in pricing transparency. Because it's all about earning trust, and if you're secretive about the number one buying consideration—pricing—it's a huge negative.”

“To solve the problem, we immediately put actual pricing up on the website (imagine that, huh?) and created a simple tool to help folks understand the pricing model and get as close to an actual quote as possible. Then we built a calculator to express Return-On-Investment, to help buyers understand and explain the value of making the switch to online safety training. Both have made a world of difference for us. So if you're talking with a provider, be sure to ask about pricing and return on investment upfront. If you can't get a straight answer, you won't want to know how much it'll actually cost your organization, and who wants to do business like that anyway.”

Josh Pratt
Developer





Vivid Learning Systems

Vivid is an online safety training company. Making life easier for safety professionals is what we do. With on demand courses that deliver an effective, memorable training experience, and systems designed for smart simplicity, we help clients protect the workforce and go beyond regulatory requirements. We get it. Visit learnatvivid.com