

A person wearing a cap and a backpack is climbing a large, white, curved structure that resembles a giant slide or a modern architectural element. The structure is set against a light sky. Several colorful arrows (blue, purple, red, dark blue) are scattered around the person, pointing upwards and to the right, symbolizing growth and progress. The overall scene is bright and optimistic.

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Buyer's Guide to Communication Skills Training

YOUR GO-TO GUIDE FOR ASKING TRAINING
VENDORS THE RIGHT QUESTIONS



Companies today are investing more in communication and other soft skills. The impact that better communication has on culture, morale, motivation, efficiency, and overall success of an organization is significant. But how do you know which solution is the right one for your organization? Investing in a training program and rolling it out is a big decision—and one that you want to get right. When evaluating potential L&D providers, use this guide to ensure that you're asking the right questions, considering the important factors, and making the most informed decision about the kind of training that will truly make a difference within your organization.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUYERS

- CREDIBILITY
- SOLUTIONS AND OFFERINGS
- REINFORCEMENT

It's estimated that for every 1,000 employees, companies waste 13.5 million dollars on ineffective training every year. Your company doesn't have to be one of them.

Credibility

You're trusting an L&D provider with your greatest asset—your people. You want to make sure that you're working with a partner that knows what they're doing. Look at what programs they offer, how they work, who they serve, and how they show value.



WHO ARE THE FACILITATORS?

One of the key indicators that your program is being led by an expert is in how they teach, not just what they teach. What is their background? What is their experience? And how are they guiding and effectively sharing the responsibility of the training outcome?

A good teacher is an expert in their field with industry experience, but a great facilitator is all of those things, plus they allow for participants to play an active role in discovery. Not only does this make the instruction more interactive, but it will also make it more effective.



WHO ARE THEIR CUSTOMERS?

Finding out which brands trust this provider to deliver quality training can give you great insight into whether they're a good fit for your business. Make sure to read case studies and testimonials to see the challenges and problems that other organizations have faced—they may be similar to the ones you're facing right now. This will help you find out how this provider helped other clients overcome their challenges, and how they may be able to help your company.



WHAT DO THEY VALUE?

What is the value proposition of the vendor? What are their beliefs? How do they measure ROI? Make sure your organization's beliefs and goals are aligned with theirs.

Red flag: If the company's definition of success is significantly different from yours, you're likely not going to get what you want out of this training.



PRO TIP:

Ask for references. Successful training vendors will be able to provide these easily.



Solutions and Offerings

Equally important is finding a credible partner that offers courses that fit your business's needs. When you're looking at training options, don't just focus on topics. Think of it in terms of the problems you're trying to solve and the end result you're trying to achieve.



HOW ARE COURSES CONDUCTED?

Online, virtual, and live in-person courses each have their own advantages. Being in a classroom with a qualified, experienced facilitator can have transformative effects on learners, and having an in-person mentor will give trainees the ability to interact with their peers, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in active application, and clarify their queries in a collaborative setting.

Virtual training, bite-sized options, and asynchronous learning allow for extreme adaptability to location, schedule, and convenience. Look for a program that can accommodate your team's size and schedules.



WHAT CHALLENGES DO THEIR PROGRAMS ADDRESS?

When you're talking with potential L&D partners, share your organization's challenges. See how many questions they ask to identify your specific needs, how well they're able to understand those needs, and what courses they recommend. If they can share any examples of how these courses have helped other companies with similar business needs, that may be useful.

PRO TIP:

While a training program should always focus on the same outcome—success—the pathways will not always be the same, and they shouldn't be. Every organization is different, and a “one size fits all” program is not going to address your needs as well as a tailored approach will. Be sure to ask your L&D partners about course tailoring and contextualization options to ensure that the programs reflect your culture, industry, values, and needs.

Reinforcement

Creating lasting change can be one of the most difficult hurdles to overcome in training. For this reason, reinforcement should be a key consideration in your decision making.

Red flag: Reinforcement is critical in order for your employees to get the most out of their training and for you to get the most out of your investment. If a solution doesn't offer reinforcement programs or resources, the training will be less effective, and you'll lose out on value in the long run.

DOES THE COMPANY HAVE RESOURCES TO HELP LEADERS ENABLE THEIR TEAMS TO APPLY WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED?

Reinforcement is not a reminder—it's about providing the practical application needed to further develop these skills after the training. Training programs should consider tools like training goals, learning objectives, and expected behavior outcomes to guide their follow-up, as well as opportunities to plan for outcomes, check for progress, and act on both positive and negative results.

DO THE FACILITATORS CHECK IN, ASSESS PROGRESS, AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE?

Your training should be an ongoing commitment, not a one-off. So just as soon as your team leaves the classroom, confirm that your training program has clear goals to help your team retain everything they've learned and make the most out of their training. This could be through post-training calls or even additional training programs. The most important takeaway is that transforming habits won't happen all at once, but gradually over time, which is why your training should work in a similar model, and sprinkle follow-up throughout the process as needed.

DOES THE COMPANY OFFER FOLLOW-UP COACHING?

It's natural behavior for participants to leave a course feeling energized and renewed, but then revert back to their normal routines and ways of thinking after returning to the workplace.

Your organization should be motivated and feel enabled to help its team members apply what they've learned in training, but the L&D provider should also play an active role. Be sure to ask if coaching programs are available and how coaching makes new skills stick.

PRO TIP:

Check out these additional [benefits of follow-up coaching](#).

Ignoring soft skills training could be costing your business millions. Don't put this decision off any longer. Use these questions and considerations to help guide your decision making. It will make it easier to identify the right solution for your organization.



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MORE ABOUT ARIEL

Ariel has more than 25 years of experience developing powerful and authentic communication skills to drive better performance for leaders and teams.

Whether you need to build a leadership pipeline, align global teams, improve internal and external communication, or boost sales effectiveness, we partner with you to transform your business through learning experiences that scale across your organization.

Learn how how Ariel can help your organization. Reach out at info@arielgroup.com or call +1.781.761.9000.

Ariel has facilitators across the globe ready to help.