SYMETRI
ADDNODE GROUP

AUTODESK
Platinum Partner

WHITE PAPER   **March 2022**

Do new ways of working require new ways of training?

The Symetri annual survey of training needs

Contents

Analysis

Introduction: Adapting to evolving training needs together

Shaping the next phase

Symetri is committed to having regular dialogue with customers. We believe that the process of sharing views and insights, whenever the moment is right, is of benefit to both parties.

From your perspective, as a customer, you help shape the services we offer and the technology we develop. From Symetri's perspective, your opinions and experience are invaluable in informing the thinking and direction of our specialists.

Reacting | Adapting | Evolving

At the time of our 2020 report, COVID was just taking hold. There was a jolt to the overall economy, stimulating rapid rethinking about previously 'normal' business operations. In the AEC and manufacturing industries, as far as training was concerned, some 35% of respondents reported a hold on all training expenditure.

The world adapted to living with the virus during the course of 2021. Now that 2022 is well underway, the feeling in many countries is that COVID will eventually be classified as endemic, rather than as a pandemic. As the initial shock waves now largely subside, this survey evaluates fundamental attitudes to the role of training; how they may have evolved, where the focus is on frequency and types of training, and what the general trends are in how training is delivered.

We have all learned together. We have all changed together. We hope that the views presented in this survey—bearing in mind they were provided at a time when COVID was at its height and the views should be taken within that context—prove of value to you in comparing your own approaches to a representative sample of your peers. We look forward to working together with you in the year ahead and wish you good health, and continuing success.

Executive Summary

The top three considerations emerging from Symetri's 2021 Training Survey are:

- **Seizing the advantage:** Along with so many aspects of how we work today, training is becoming more agile. As companies seek to ensure their skills-set matches the needs of both clients and project complexities, they require training that can be accessed without lengthy planning.

  Almost all respondents (99%) identify their training requirements in this way; by paying attention to the business need and the competitive advantage. The nature of current and upcoming projects drives the need for training among 42% of respondents, and 'business demands' drive the need for 57%.

- **Evaluating training trends:** The pandemic backdrop redefined aspects of business interaction. 'Physical' participation in training became subject to limitations. Yet a year on, as such restrictions are relaxed, the legacy of essential behaviours during this period remains. Physical has gone digital, as virtual training with a third-party provider—the chosen method for 58% of the survey sample—comes second only to e-learning at 63%. However, chosen doesn't necessarily mean the most effective.

  These are signs of the times. Training can be requested when needed, and in the most appropriate format. It may also be more readily approved; in many organisations it will be easier to justify a member of staff, or teams, undertaking a course online than travelling, being away from their job for days, and incurring net additional expense to the course fees.

- **Developing the business:** When it comes to continuously developing the business, companies do not limit themselves; while training needs can be classified as essentials, intermediate, and advanced, 'essentials' is the only training category catered for in-house; both on the company's own premises and conducted by its own staff, who may not necessarily be dedicated trainers but have the skills that others look to gain.

  The need for externally provided training does not decrease, even if perceived barriers limit the convening of classroom groups; 30% of respondents identify classroom training with a third-party provider as the chosen approach, compared to 58% opting for virtual training, also with a third-party provider.

  Companies turn to existing providers for their training, with decisions to proceed being made on the basis of the extent of the deliverable outcomes as proposed in the course agenda. This highlights the need to work with a training provider who understands the industry/changes, trends, and current developments/relevant apps and technologies; a provider who evolves with the AEC and manufacturing industries.

Methodology

The purpose of this third Symetri annual training survey was to hear from our customers—in both the AEC and the manufacturing sector—how they have viewed aspects of training through an immensely challenging period. We presented respondees with questions on frequency, preferred modes of delivery, how they identify training requirements and which areas of software skills merit the greatest focus. We also looked at the nature of in-house training, and views on the classroom scenario.

Our motivation in gaining these views is two-fold:

- To enable you to compare your own approach to those which appear to be representative of peers in the same sector; providing either reassurance for your approaches or stimulus to revisit them
- To make sure we continue to deliver services our customers need and want.

Sample composition

Of the 90 respondents to this Symetri survey, 88% were from AEC, and 12% from manufacturing. Roles and responsibilities represented were software users/training delegates (29%), decision makers (36%), CAD/BIM managers (33%) and those directly charged with areas of learning and development within their organisations (2%).

Analysis

Section 1: Seizing the advantage

To understand how training fits within a company culture and ways of doing things, it is important to look at how embedded training is within the business; is it viewed as a valuable resource that contributes to an organisation's ability to improve its competitive advantage, or something which sits outside a company's sphere of activity? Is it a side-bar, or a critical pillar of progress?

Surprisingly, 17% of respondents said that they do not typically invest in training. This means that they view it as an exception; conceivably even a 'last resort'.

Considering this response, it cannot, surely, be the case that almost two companies in ten disregard the value of gaining new skills or refreshing existing ones? It is likely that such responses reflect the size and culture of the company (small team, seasoned professionals who self-teach or share skills) or a degree of modesty in not referring to their own internal knowledge transfer approaches between staff as 'training'; the assumption that continuous personal development is an individual choice; something that happens 'on the job' when the job demands it to happen.

83% of companies see training as a pillar of continuous improvement; either responding to specific identified needs, or being an established agenda item in the planning for the business year. Both reflect an awareness of the need for continuous improvement.

Whenever the need arises	Embedded in the company culture
67%	17%

Frequency of training

When we asked how often companies undertake training, again there was an interesting one in five (20%) admittance to doing no training at all. For response analysis purposes the assumption is not that such organisations are standing still but rather that they may not perceive their current approach as 'training'. Were the opposite to be true — that they are resisting change, slow to adopt new technologies, or even resistant to affecting any shift in how they have always done things — it would provide comfort to other companies to know that around a fifth of the competition is out of touch with new project requirements; an unlikely scenario in sectors as dynamic as AEC and associated areas of manufacturing.

The other 80% of businesses train with various degrees of frequency:

Annually	Half-yearly	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly
32%	16%	20%	9%	3%

Decision factors

Training should be seen to help move the business forward. If it takes designers away from the day-to-day before the training even begins, it means that focus on the main task and mission of the business is impacted. Planning how to approach training, looking for options in the market, assessing training organisations as well as the content and style of their courses are all time-consuming tasks.
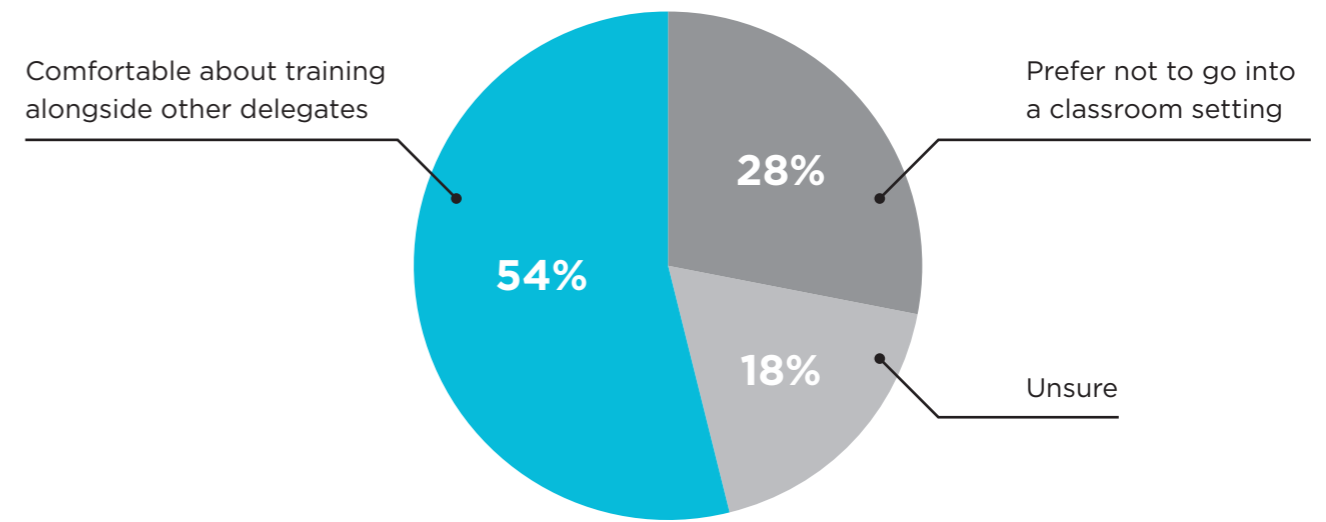
This would support the observation that 58% of respondents consult with their current vendor or service provider. Where trusted relationships exist in this regard, it is the obvious way to go; a committed third-party partner likely to understand the needs and objectives of the business and to align recommendations to core business and personal development goals.

Nonetheless, 30% of companies looking for training choices rely on internet searches. 'Cold contact' strategies of this nature may well provide an overview of options but may also lead to more introductory groundwork when a training provider is found. Given that 48% of respondents see price as a key factor in training choices, the depth provided by an existing third-party provider could be lacking.

Section 2: Evaluating training trends

Is it a testing time for the classroom?

We asked the question: 'How do you feel about classroom training with other delegates?' The sub-text of the question is to what degree COVID has wrought fundamental changes to a method of training which carries some benefits not always transferable to a virtual environment. The opportunity to meet and mingle with peers from the same or similar sectors is one such benefit, although not inherent to the acquiring of a new skill. It can be considered a 'soft' benefit; one of those 'intangibles' that make human interaction the enriching experience it can be.

Comfortable about training alongside other delegates — 54%
Prefer not to go into a classroom setting — 28%
Unsure — 18%

Beyond the classroom

Whilst the classroom setting has shaken off its COVID taboo, it has certainly come into question. As it did so, companies looked to virtual and e-learning methods. An experiment became a realisation of the benefits; the realisation became confirmation; this then became the foundation of a new trend.

The classroom is here to stay, but the virtual and e-learning approach now brings greater choice—both for candidates, from their own personal preferences, and for the business from the point of view of convenience, continuity, and costs.

As virtual training gains acceptability, we asked respondents what may be stopping them if they had not yet explored it. One respondent suggested that creating a time-slot in the office was a problem and even if the training went ahead, it would be disturbed by normal office 'busyness'; phones going, visitors, colleagues, team meetings and other interruptions. This provides an interesting comparison with the classroom setting, where the focus is uniquely on the task of training.

At time of writing this report, compared to the time at which our customers' opinions were gathered, social distancing and other restrictions have all but disappeared. Even so, caution prevails for many people. It will be interesting to see if face-to-face training makes a full or only partial return over the next year.

Section 3: Developing the business

63% Respondents who use E-learning training methods

58% Respondents who take virtual training courses with a third-party provider

**49%** Respondents who run in-house training courses

The value of 'on-demand' training

Whether in the office, at home, or on-the-move, it is no longer necessary for those who seek training to take any marked absence from current projects, or suffer any interruption to business-as-usual. Training is an agile tool to enable businesses to strengthen their competitive advantage. If an individual turns to e-learning methods, he or she is self-directed. The approach offers the flexibility of being able to jump in to the training at any time. It is literally 'turn on/turn off'. If it has a shortfall, it is in that the individual is left to their own capabilities entirely. There is no interaction with anybody else, no opportunity to ask specific questions other than may be offered in a 'Frequently-Asked-Questions' section of the training module, and no immediate access to a subject matter expert.

It is likely that e-learning has become a popular learning method through the course of the pandemic because of the almost 'instantaneous' nature of being able to pull down training modules—acquiring skills at the moment they are required or in need of refresh.

As a 'complement' to other training methods—in person, with an expert, either physically or virtually (online)—the relevance of e-learning as an overall approach comes from the nature of how we were doing things in the midst of the pandemic. Interactions within the world of work became less formalised, more conveniently assimilated within the culture, more readily obtainable as and when needs arise. Such needs may be based on a candidate's personal skills requirements or aspects of projects which require a rapid injection of 'how to' insight from subject matter experts.

30% Respondents who take classroom training courses with a third-party provider
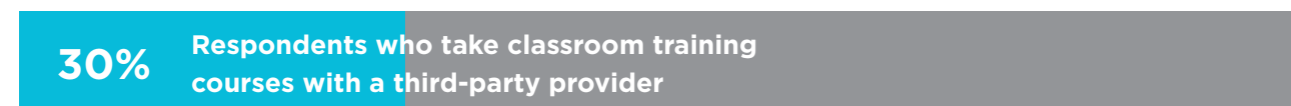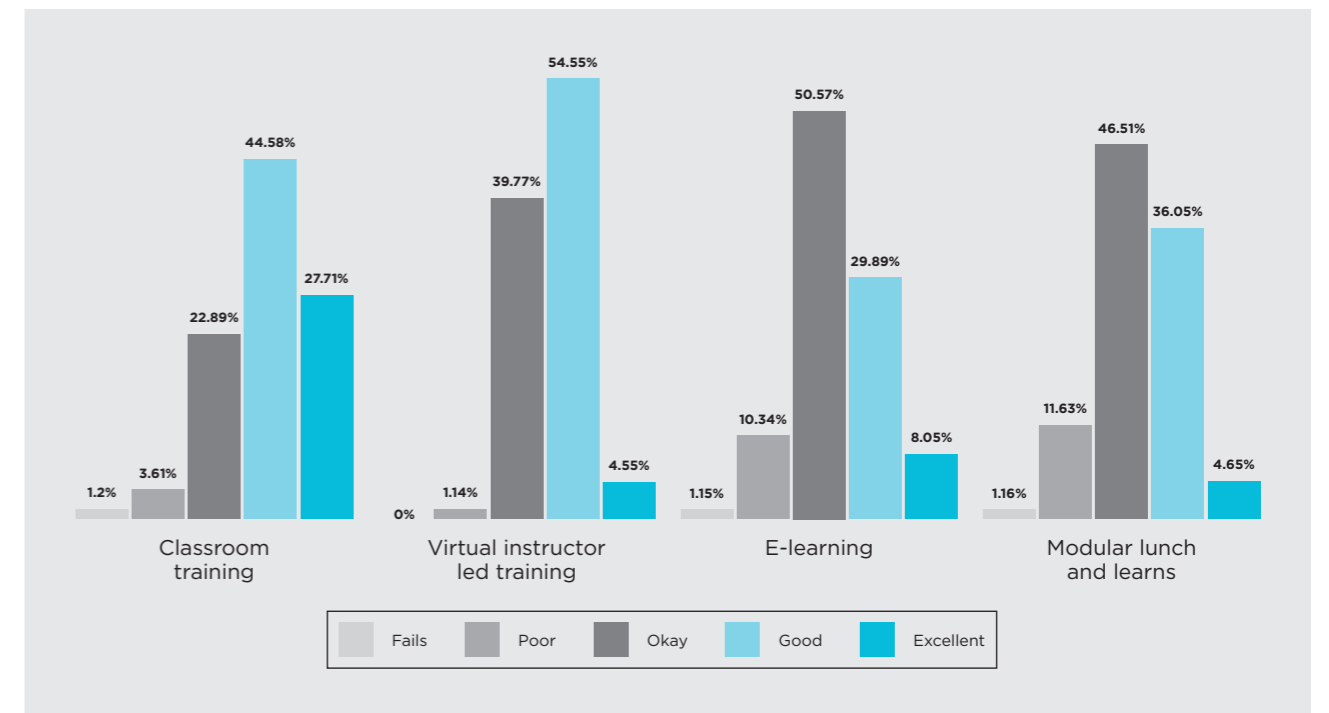
Classroom training is still seen as the most effective method of acquiring skills even as virtual approaches gain in appeal. This reflects the way in which the home working trend has evolved. At the height of COVID the gathering of groups within a classroom setting made little sense because there was too much potential exposure. As home working grew, hybrid working presented a bridge between physical and virtual.

At time of writing the idea of attending the office (or being in a classroom) appears less daunting. Some companies now query if physical distance brings adverse impact into the organisation (lack of sociability, erosion of loyalty, reduction of collaboration).

28% Excellence rating for classroom training effectiveness

With the growth in popularity of virtual training and e-Learning, organisations now have more flexibility in how they choose to develop skills within the business. Classroom training, however, holds greater appeal when respondents were asked about the effectiveness of the variety of training methods available to them.

Chart: Training effectiveness ratings by method

	Fails	Poor	Okay	Good	Excellent
Classroom training	1.2%	3.61%	22.89%	44.58%	27.71%
Virtual instructor led training	0%	1.14%	39.77%	54.55%	4.55%
E-learning	1.15%	10.34%	50.57%	29.89%	8.05%
Modular lunch and learns	1.16%	11.63%	46.51%	36.05%	4.65%

Training in 2022

With 2022 underway, more of our customers are enquiring about training courses. Virtual training is still more popular – with some companies looking for tailored courses. On an individual basis, although a budget may have been allocated for training, the best use of the available funds is not always immediately obvious. In such instances we explore their needs further with them to identify their development needs.

Since this survey was undertaken, COVID is evidently receding, confidence is returning and training budgets are making a comeback.

Conclusion

Being there when its needed, wherever 'there' may be

In concluding last year's report, we observed: "As we look to 2021, the only truly reliable prediction is that…from a training perspective, we expect change, more use of virtual training, but the time-honoured value of professional excellence will be a reliable constant".

Such proved to be the case with virtual training although it could be argued that, although accelerated by the pandemic, the growth in popularity of virtual training is a reflection of a digital world. For example, a development which moved rapidly during 2021 was the use of online conferencing as a medium through which the working from home workforce continued to function as efficiently as it ever had within an office environment.

The age of hybrid training has arrived

New ways of working soon emerged. Working from home transitioned, for many, into adoption of hybrid office strategies. New ways of training came of age; if working could be undertaken from any location on any device, it followed that training could and would offer the same flexibility, the same choice, the same agility.

Yet the greater part of choice is to have the ability to embrace training in the way that best suits the organisation and the individual. Remote working is now in its phase of infancy where many question what may be lost as traditional work is ousted by digital. There are now as many defenders of the office culture—the team spirit, the ability to collaborate, the added energy that comes with interacting with colleagues —as there are of the 'anywhere' culture.

The crux of the classroom training debate is around the distillation of human contact that some perceive as regressive. The answer; as long as there is a need there will be a choice.

The age of the hybrid approach to training and skills development—at home, in the office, in the café or in the classroom—has arrived.

Symetri is delighted to have the opportunity to take the journey with you.

Final thoughts

Our training offering contains more than 100 courses to make sure that you can find the knowledge you need to advance your skills. Symetri is also committed to providing choice in how people gain or improve their skills. Face-to-face, trainer-led classroom training, the option of virtual training, and the complementary approach of e-learning all go to make up this choice. Individuals are far more likely to embrace training enthusiastically when the way in which it's provided has been in response to their own preferences.

Classroom training encourages interaction between people; between the attendees and the trainers, and in the sharing of problems, perspectives, and direct project experiences. Many people would have become nervous of proximity to others, however, and this should be taken into account when making the choice of training methods.

We treat the remote nature of virtual training as 'classroom gone digital'. Far from anything being lost in the experience, there are associated advantages; the travel requirements and its associated costs disappear, teams do not lose valuable resource by members being absent from the office.

Symetri fully understand the evolving nature of personal preferences. In 2022 we are watching developments closely, responding to what customers want in the way they want it. We look forward to continuing on the next part of this journey with you.

The Symetri training team are industry-experienced, Autodesk Certified, skilled Application Specialists and Consultants, who go beyond simply training and bring many years' collective experience of product and industry insights.

More about us

With more than 750+ employees and 250,000 daily users in Northern Europe and the United States of America, Symetri offer guidance in everything from 3D modelling and simulation to Product Lifecycle Management (PLM), Building Information Modelling (BIM) and how to maximise the potential of your projects.

We have over 30 offices in Northern Europe and the United States of America.

We challenge people to
Work smarter
for a better future