PRESENTER: I won't start again, how's that? Is that OK? We're going to talk about communities of practice, user groups, and how you can really leverage those within your company of any size. And what are those? And really, what you need to do to enable those and empower those to help learning.

So why is training denied and learning approved? And this is something that we found in our organization. If somebody goes to their supervisor and says, I need to get training, the first thing that is said is like, you know, that training budget this year, I said we had it, but we really don't have it. And we certainly don't have the time to send you to training. But if somebody comes through and says, wow, you know, Jill, I just learned this.

And this is really great. And I like to share that. That seems to be embraced a little bit better. So there's an absolute difference between a training culture and a learning culture. And most engineering firms, for as long as I've worked for engineering firms, we've always been under a training culture.

And a training culture is, just as I said, it's very organized, it's budgeted, people get sent off to training. They go, they get trained, they come back, and maybe they retain something and maybe they didn't and maybe they shared or maybe they didn't. But it was very, very isolated. But learning is something we want to encourage all the time. Everybody learns.

You want to learn how to change your oil, you're going to go on YouTube and you're going to see what are the steps to go through and learn. You're going to take little bits of learning when you need it, consume it, and move on. And so we need to incorporate that into our organizations because that's how people are learning now. And so if we can guide that and we can be directive, we're giving people tools that they may not have had before.

So and I just talked over the slides. Sorry. It's perception. It's all perception and training versus learning. So what I found in my communications is that I'm very distinct when I'm using the term learning and when I'm using the term training. And in all of my communications, I will say in our training and learning resources, because we still do both within our organization. I don't know that we'll ever get away from the need for training courses.

But we want to wrap in the learning as well. So that's going to be really important when you

start moving down and talking about the strategy that you're putting together. So for the sake of this presentation, I have some definitions that I live by. So training is different from learning and educating is different from both in my organization. I'm the one educating employer or the management of the corporation on what the difference is between training and learning, the importance of both, and why we need a strong learning plan, learning culture in place. So you'll never stop educating your employer and your employees.

So just to add a little more of a clear definition there. Where training, it's very instructor-based, event-based, centralized, and siloed in that maybe San Diego got training because California had more of a budget than St. Louis within your organization and so it was siloed. It's not shared. It was captured in one location with no real way to push that through your organization.

We're learning is learner central. They're the ones running out to learn something. I do it all the time. You do it.

Anyone this week go to YouTube to learn something? Yeah. It just happens. So we need to bring that mentality into the business and how we're going to do some of those things. I'm going to let you out of here way too soon if I'm going too fast.

There we go. So one of the things when you want to start building your strategy to include a training component and a learning component is to understand where your company stands currently on that. OK. And what I mean by that is go out and, obviously, talk to management and things like that. But I went, actually, when I started to actually put the document together. We had been a training organization or had a training component since 2005.

And I was putting things together. But it wasn't until a few years ago that I actually wrote the document. And one of the first things I did when we went into the document was, what is the company's stand on learning and training and development. What's their mission statement? So going to the public facing website and going through some of those mission and how they're trying to attract people to come to the company, those are really strong statements that you can use in your learning strategy to prove why you need a learning strategy.

So I went out and I think I picked up in your guide or in the handout, there's a couple of companies. I just snagged two or three sentences from Skanska and some other companies. And you've got really nice statements that you can start your learning strategy with. Based on our belief that innovation and training are important, we're submitting this learning strategy to

you for approval. You can tie-in the company's vision on learning and training.

So that's that one. So there's our goal. So our goal is-- I'm not going to read it to you, you can read it. But those are really important to tie that in. One of the things one of the hurdles that you actually may come up with and we did initially as well is, why do you need a learning strategy? Why do you need a plan in place? You know we have training through HR.

But this is not HR training. This is not code of conduct or whatever it is that you have to go through every single year. And you can certainly team with your HR Department because they probably have a learning management system in place. And so they've got the resources for things like that, but they do not have the bandwidth to understand a training program for engineers and technicians on specialized software that changes monthly.

So when we put our strategy together, it's very similar to talking to management about the need for a CAD or BIM manager. Why do you need a CAD and BIM manager? IT installs everything, it's there. It's done. But it's not done because there's that sweet spot in the middle of somebody who truly understands what needs to get done in the end.

And so just as you're building your learning strategy and the plan you're going to present to business for funding and budget and to set the stage for learning, you want to consider a learning manager, somebody like me that understands the business, where it came from, the software, and why it's important to put together a certain package. I team with HR all the time because we've got a, well, it's now called the My Learning Portal, it used to be PB University, but I utilized that site that was there for regular training for my information. They have no clue what I do and how I put it together on that site. So when you're putting together your strategy, think about having budget available for somebody who's dedicated to learning and training. OK.

So management really likes their facts and their numbers and all of their things. So go on and do a little bit of research. This was a little bit old. It's probably better now. But by putting in a learning strategy rather than just a training strategy, you can outperform your competitors 3 to 1. Making learning and training or learning content available all the time, 24/7, is going to enable and empower your staff. And that's what we're trying to do with our program.

So when once you're running through and you're starting to put things together, take a look at what's in your organization right now. What are you doing for training? I'm sure there's a component of training in your organization. What is that?

Is it working? Is it not working? Do you want to keep that as part of your strategy as one of the components? And there's so many things that you can include. I think I have everything up here that we do and we talk about. We use ATC instructors, we do live onsite courses, we do virtual courses, we do eLearning, we do videos, we do lunch and learn. We take advantage of AU online all the time within our organization.

So there's just things to think about as you're putting together your strategy. What's that perfect mix for you? And what's going to work for your staff?

I don't see that. I thought I was showing that slide, I should have looked. But those are all the options out there. So internal, external, online, Linda.com, CAD learning, Global eTraining, university, local tech school, ATCs, internal experts. There's so many different components that you can put together.

And once you figure out where your strategy is going and how you want to put that together, you're then going to be able to start measuring who's taking advantage of what type of training and what's important to staff and what type of learners are they. So once you do that, once you've got a picture of what's in place, you can start moving on to your executive summary. And this is the template that I talked about that I included in the handouts.

So you start with your executive summary and just briefly telling them, this is your elevator speech. This is management's got a bandwidth that's very small when you're presenting things to them. So be very concise in your statement. What are you looking for? What do you want?

Your report's going to go into, certainly, more depth. But in the beginning, we want to embrace our company's vision for learning. State the vision. And in doing that, we're offering this as an option within our organization.

And then talk about it, within the document, talk about the background and what's been happening throughout the years, what's worked, what hasn't worked. Maybe nothing's been in place. Maybe you always sent people out.

Talk to people. Talk to the people that are actually going to be utilizing these. And ask them what's their comfort level. We went for a time we've been formally doing training and had a program in place since 2005. And back in 2006-07, I had the biggest resistance to eBooks from the people doing classes and learning. It was crazy.

But eBooks aren't such a evil thing any longer. So things change. So talk to staff. Do some surveys. What would you like to see in your program? Maybe we can put that in there. Maybe it's something you haven't even thought of yet.

So what was done in the past? Was there any upper management support? Was it just a training culture? Have they already moved into a learning culture? So just lay the groundwork.

You could be presenting to somebody who understands all of it and knows it or you could be presenting to somebody brand new to the organization and doesn't understand where you came from and the struggles that you've had. So then my component or my learning strategy had an Autodesk component in it, why we use the software, the importance of that software, and the disciplines that it touches and why we're doing that. I also had a Bentley component in ours because we used both products so it was all mixed together.

The template, I only included your Autodesk overview, but you can certainly [? mirror ?] [? it. ?] So when you're looking at online training, or excuse me, onsite training, so what's your perfect scenario for that onsite, is it developing trainers internally to your organization? Is it pairing with a university, a tech school? Is it pairing with a local ATC or a reseller? Again, what were you doing and where do you want that style of training?

Maybe you're done with it. I don't know. Maybe it's a minor component to it. And so is there any way you can-- the other thing to look at is if you're moving into a big push and rolling out a new piece of software, going to Fusion 360, whatever it happens to be, maybe you need to have a contract with a local provider. And can you negotiate a deal with that provider?

Say, I've got 500 people I'm going to be training over the next year, what can we do to put a program together? And include that as a component of your learning strategy. Online virtual classroom option. Do you have the capability within your organization to provide that?

More and more when we first started, we were using Adobe Connect a lot, then we had complaints. And we moved to GoToMeeting. Now we're on Skype and we do a lot of immediate learning and training just through our Skype environment and desktop sharing. So what are the tools you have in place? And do you have the bandwidth to use those and get people together?

When we were initially doing virtual classroom training, one of the biggest hurdles I had was making sure that people had headsets on the computers because it was online. Well, now in

our organization, everybody has a headset because we have Voice over IP, we use Skype, and so that's not an issue anymore. So look at your environment, look at how you're going to be pulling in and doing training. As a large organization, virtual classroom, live, instructor-led virtual classrooms were really important to us.

We've got people all over the country, all over the world. We did an event last year, I had a subject matter expert based in the UK, half the project team was in Canada and half the project team was in India. And after we figured out the time difference, scheduled a live class, it went great. It was perfect.

The instructor got really high marks. The team was happy. The team was able to collaborate virtually together. They had never met. And it set the project up for a lot of successes.

So I just actually talked to the project manager yesterday and he was telling me again how fabulous that event was. So virtual classroom training is a really nice thing. It minimizes cost. It is training.

So there's that perception of too expensive, pulling people off projects. But on the flip side, if it's virtual online and you have the bandwidth to make it smooth, everybody is in their own offices, they're not traveling. They're using their own desktops. And you're accomplishing a live training event. So think about that component as well.

So eLearning. This was actually a funny one for us because when we started, our whole goal was to have blended learning. Blended learning was our term. And it's funny because that term, we used it wrong in the beginning. And the resources available to us from an eLearning provider were pretty slim back then. But now there's a lot of options.

There's multiple vendors out on the exhibit floor that you can tap into. So with that, I would say, take a look at what you want out of an eLearning provider. That's going to be key. Are videos good? Are videos not good? Do you want the eLearning provider to have the ability to provide reporting to you as a manager, user transcripts, which enables the users to do training. I was actually asked a number of years ago by our provider-- I wasn't asked, I was told by our eLearning provider that they had the option to turn off different training aspects in their tool so that it just focused on different groups.

So I thought that was the silliest thing I'd ever heard of, but apparently people do that. But in my idea of eLearning is that I want everybody to see everything. I want you as a civil engineer

who uses Civil 3D to clearly do the training and do the learning you need to do on that product. But if you'd like to spend your weekend learning 3D Studio Max, go for it. So we reveal everything within our organization but that's something you may want to look at as well is the ability to set up groups and isolate training and isolate resources.

It's not something we wanted to do. But if that's important, you're going to have to talk to an eLearning provider for that. As a large organization, we have to be completely transparent in the decisions we make. So every time a contract ends with an eLearning provider, we re-evaluate all of the providers to see if we're on the same and right track. So if you've never had an eLearning provider, it may be something you want to look at and ask them very specific questions about what they do, how they do it, and is it going to pair up with what you really want to do.

So then one of the other components in the strategy should be, what's your thoughts on user certification? So I did a little poll earlier. We only had a few people say that they did certification. And that could be because maybe you're not in product and you're not ready to do certification.

Certification is an interesting thing. As a organization, we're committed to it. We believe it's important. However, we do not train our staff to be certified. So there's a little bit of a line there. We have a lot of resources available if they'd like to do certification prep on their own and take a certification exam that we'll pay for. And we think it's important. But that's a hard thing to sell to management that we're actually going to be training our staff to pass the certification exam.

So every organization is different. But as you're making that deal with the ATC or the university that's close to you, talk to them about certification. They can probably make a package deal and wrap it together if that's important. So final component to the learning strategy, then, is going to be, what are your recommendations moving forward? It's great that you told them what you want. You told them the condition that's been in place.

You told them the components you want. But now you need a clear statement on what you're looking for. You need budget. You maybe need a SharePoint site to house all the information. You're going to need funding for that position, the CAD Training Manager potentially, and then if there's cost to eLearning. And there's still cost to learning, even though learning is very organic and your users are going to be doing it, there still should be a budgeting cost in place

so that if you're demanding that they go through a certain amount of learning, you're covering their labor. So there's something to think about in there.

So put your cost estimate together for that. And then show some references and how other organizations are dealing with training, certification. Autodesk has things out, case studies out on their site for training and training successes. And you don't even need to stay within our industry, you could tap out to Google and do a Google search and see what other companies are doing for learning strategies and just kind of set the stage and show that this is not some crazy scheme that you've come up, but something that a lot of different organizations are moving into and the importance of it.

So one of the case studies we did when certification was rolling out, we worked with Autodesk and did a pilot for certification. And we had a 76% pass rate in our pilot Autodesk did a white paper. So that's out there on how an organization can adopt certification and a plan to get certified. And one of the biggest returns that we had off of that was the excitement from our staff.

They couldn't believe that we were going to get them ready to be certified and get certified. They couldn't believe the investment we were putting in just that we cared about their personal development and their professional development. And so there's a lot of goodwill there. And so I know that there's always that comment, if I train them, they leave.

That's not the case. If you train them and provide resources for them to develop and grow, they're going to value your company. They're going to leave for something else, they're not going to leave because you trained them.

So I touched on this a little bit earlier on whose responsibility it is for this training and learning strategy. So I think it's both. You used to be the employer. I'm the employee, I'm sitting at my cubicle, I'm doing my designs, and then my boss would come and say, we're going to send you off to Civil 3D training. There were some big thing. And there you go, you're going to get trained again.

So I would wait for them to tell me. Or sometimes, I would go and say I think I should go to that AU thing, whatever that thing is. But before, it was always on the employer. But now, I believe it's really part of I think the ownership is really both. Go. There it goes.

So the employer definitely needs to be the champion of it. They need to have some funding in

place for you, provide that infrastructure I was talking about, whether that's a learning management system, a SharePoint site, where all of your learning can be housed and harvested from. But the employee definitely needs to make it a priority. Nothing is standing still.

Working in software, it hasn't stood still for a long time. But the way we were training people acted as if it stood still. Does that make sense? When I was in school learning to be a drafter and I had my pencils and my ink on Mylar, you could train me how to do that and use a lettering guide. And I had it. It was done.

But technology is never done and it's always changing. So we have to put those components in place so that you are enabling your staff to be the best they can be. And if you give them the ownership and give them the cookie jar, so to speak, they're going to do it. They're going to grab it and they're going to eat and they're going to enjoy every bit of that learning that's available to them, or at least we hope they will, right?

There's still going to be some shifting. I know there was in our company. You need to identify those people that are still stuck in the training culture mode. And you need to start educating them on the importance of a learning culture.

And in our condition, we still have traditional training but we have a whole bunch of learning resources available. And that's where we need to do. And once you define those and you give them that path and you give them that site to share that information, then you're going to be able to start capturing who's doing what and how and be able to report back to management that your program's been embraced.

This brings us to our fourth learning objective. Internal user groups are communities of practice in how they can promote training and learning. Does anyone have an internal user group? A couple of people. Anyone belong to an external user group? Good. Good. OK.

So you get it. You understand the importance of a user group. Being here at Autodesk University is being part of a really big community of practice, really. Everybody's here excited about pieces of software. You've probably gone through classes. And if you're on one track, whether it's manufacturing or infrastructure, you're probably seeing a lot of the same faces, maybe had some talks over cookies, exchanged business cards. You're developing those user groups and those connections that you really need.

So we feel the importance of having that community within the organization is one more component of a learning resource that we have for our staff. And it was different back in the day. So the first place I worked kind of looked like that. It was the fishbowl of drafting tables and one phone on the post in the middle of the room. And you did not want to be the one that the phone was ringing for because you got looked at by the boss that sat up at the front and looked at all the drafting tables.

But in that culture, people helped you. As a brand new person coming in, they were telling you how to set up your drawing, what to do, what you were looking for. There was a lot of apprentice internship mentoring going on in this big pool, this physical pool within the organization.

I know I just dated myself, right, because I started on the board. But that's right. But things evolved. It evolved pretty quickly for me. That was just the first place I worked.

But then we went into cubicles. And we got computers. Maybe we worked on a Unix-based system. Maybe we worked on a clipper station. Anyone know what I'm talking about? No. Maybe you came out when AutoCAD was very young in the 2.X versioning of things and the PCs and that level.

Whatever it was, you were in a cubicle. You may have had a standalone license. And you transferred data knowledge using your floppy disks.

It then evolved to land connections and then WAN connections. But sharing became a little more difficult because you were isolated. You were put in a little box by yourself. You did share and you needed to share because software was so new to all of us that it really made a difference if you were playing and sharing information together.

But on a whole, we were stuck in that training culture, where maybe you started, they said, we're going to send you to a week of training, then you're going to go on production. And that may have been the last training you had for five years because they had to send other people. So still training, but just not as effectively.

But as we move into the world we live in now with everything connected and resources available to you on every different platform and device that you have, we've got to step up our training or step up our learning. Sorry. So anyway, use the terms and then I got it wrong. Things are changing. Expectations are changing for the younger crowd.

The way they learn and the way they get things has changed. And so we need to provide that group of learners, the resources they need in the way they like to get it. We still need to talk about the Generation X and the Generation Y. And every generation that's still in the workforce has a different way of learning, which is why you have to think of that when you're putting your strategy together.

And when you have a community of practice and you bring these people together, there's power there. A community of practice, I've talked about this a lot at AU. If you're at all curious about communities of practice and building them within your organization, there's classes out on AU online that you can get into and talk or just take a look at some of those things. A community is not a department meeting where the boss is at the top talking down to everyone in the organization.

A community of practice is peer-to-peer, regardless of your job title and your HR level, it's everybody working together to get something done. And so when you've got a community of practice in place, you can utilize that to do those lunch and learns. You can utilize it to push out information to provide learning to people. So if you're at all interested in communities, it's something that we tie in very closely with learning and successfully as well.

So you've gone through and you've done your research. You've put together the perfect package. You've made your learning strategy. You've presented it to businesses. I really like that, it's good work, let's start it at the first of the year. Well, then you're saying, great, now what do I do? Because it is just all theory to this point.

But the next thing is to start getting your message out. And that messaging is really going to make a difference in how you're talking to people. Tailor your communications to your audience. If you're talking to management, you need to be brief, you need to be clear, and you need to move on.

If you're talking to the end user, you can get down in the weeds and start talking about families and corridors and different things like that and the importance of learning those and staying on top of those. But develop a communication plan. And this is important because if you have a schedule for everything, well, in my world anyway, if I put it on my schedule, I'm going to get it done. So the worst thing is not having resources available when you say they're going to be available.

So say what you're going to do and do what you-- did I say that right? Say what you're going to do and do what you say so that you're sure you're being very predictable when you're delivering either content or links or different things like that. As a global organization, I researched how to communicate to a bigger organization. One of the things that I learned is sending out a communication about a new program or a new learning resource coming out. The worst time to do that is 4 o'clock on a Friday.

I may feel a monster amount of satisfaction saying, I just completed what I wanted to this week and hit the send button to 12,000 of my closest friends. But the problem with that piece of communication is that, in most cases, it's going to sit in that inbox until Monday morning and then it's going to get deleted with the rest of the advertisements and junk because everybody wants to clean their inboxes out. So if that's a thing, if you're not getting the responses that you thought from your communications, take a look at how you're communicating and when you're communicating and what that messaging is because it really makes a difference.

Hook up with HR. It's near impossible within my organization. But if you're at a size of an organization, maybe part of your communication is a sheet of paper or a communication that can be given to all new staff coming on board, which gives them that first piece of information. We're very regionalized and siloed within our global organization.

So that could be on my to-do list. That's a big one for me. But if you're not, if your company is not that big, get your package together and have that as one of the new hire packets going out.

So I may have actually already covered this. But speaking to the audience, that's really important. Don't just do email, call people, connect with people, have conversations. If you're going to an AU like this, anyone, how many people, you're the only person from your organization that's here at AU? OK, all right. You're here, so that's the high point. So that's really good.

If you're in a larger organization, you may have multiple people here that you've never met. Make a point of meeting these people. That's going to start building your community and building your communication network. And get those messaging out because you can put it in place but if they don't come and use it and you're reporting on really bad returns, the life of that plan may not be there. OK.

I like this slide. I have two kids, they're teenagers. I'm always saying, would you just listen to

me? So I need to take this slide around. I thought it was funny. They did not laugh at this slide like I did, but that's my teenagers.

We found that creating short videos, in addition-- and these aren't necessarily learning videos, well, I guess they are. They're education videos. And what we did is we made videos that pointed to management and videos that pointed to our learners setting expectations. So if a manager comes to me and says, you know, I know that they need to learn. I know what's important.

I don't want to let them go to training. I'm lukewarm on the learning idea. We created videos that were available that they talked about the importance of that. And these were the points that we covered, but they were short videos, 12, 10, 12 minutes long at most. But they talked to the audience. In the management video, we talked about the importance of allowing them to participate in training even after they were approved for training.

At the time, we were doing a lot of virtual classrooms and they're sitting at their desks. And the guy coming up, could you just plot this for me? Could you just jump in that file? Disrupting their classroom environment. So we really tried to make management understand that just because they're at their cubicle, you need to respect that learning time for them.

And we had a lot of positive responses from that because they went, well, you're right, I did approve it. And now, I'm washing it down by getting them pulled away. So another strategy is to get them out of there, even though maybe they're sitting at their desk, maybe they put a sign up or there's some sort of flag that says, don't bother this person, they're in training. So there's lots of little ideas that you can do.

And the same thing for the employee. Get fully engaged in it. If you're sitting at your desk and all of your stuff is around, you really got to try to focus on your learning right now.

Well, you guys are getting out early. I think I talked too fast today. So I guess my biggest message is, and you've heard it a lot over the course of AU so far, is the way we learn and the resources available to us are incredibly different than they were 5 years ago, 10 years ago. And we need as corporations to understand that and embrace these new learning ways and dovetail everything together. It's not one or the other, in my opinion.

I have a training culture. I have training classes. And I have to have learning resources. Because without both putting and working together, I'm not servicing my staff the way I need

to. I'm not providing them with the resources. But by providing the resources and giving them a direction on what I want them to use, I'm able to capture what they're doing, understand where they are in their learning, and help them with different learning paths and put things in place for them.

So make sure that's all I had. So if you've got any questions, I'm happy to talk about training and learning, what we've done in our organization. They still have me working for them after 12 years of doing this, so I'm hoping they either haven't noticed me yet or it's still working OK. And with all of our organizations coming together, it's been a really interesting challenge for us.

Parsons Brinckerhoff embrace training, funded my position, really went gung ho. But as other companies are being acquired and we were acquired, it's been very interesting to see where other people don't have things and really like the package we've put together. So any questions? Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Is it enough to create a [INAUDIBLE] learning infrastructure or do you need some way to reward or test the [? employee ?] [INAUDIBLE]?

PRESENTER: So your question was, is it enough just to put it out there or do you recognize and reward their participation? I believe we have to reward their participation. So we worked with our community of practice in a big way. Community of practice has some internal badging that we have. But that badging is tied to amount of learning in a year. So if you can get 40 hours of learning in place, you get a new badge.

And badges are really important to some people. So we reward in that way. We also have worked with HR and put in a learning criteria or learning guideline for each position. So as you go through your technical track of things, if you're a T-9 right now and, boy, you'd like to get to a T-11, which is just a technical grade, the expectation is, this is how much learning you're going to do. You have to move out of AutoCAD and go to Civil 3D.

And so we've worked a little bit with HR just to set those expectations and then they would be rewarded by getting a new pay grade and things like that. So I think it's an important component to have that. And some people eat up badging. Some people like the opportunity to show off what they know.

If they're a high learner, we've got swag too. We'll give away a shirt or we'll give away a mug

and we'll do little things like that to get things going. But I know that people like some of those things.

Training is one thing but when you look at learning, usually is there some part of the hours that people are working for? Or is it part of work that you're learning?

So we still budget time for them to train slash learn. And sometimes it means that we have to allow them time to watch or go through some of the eLearning components to get ready for a job. Maybe they've been working on a roadway, but they haven't been into utilities too much.

And so we let them get into the utility portion of the videos. And that's part of your job. I'm going to pay you because you need to refresh your skillset on that. But we don't restrict access to the eLearning site.

It's available, the one that we use, is 24/7 on any device. And so when I go and look at training reports, people are using it in all hours. I don't pay them if they're off on the weekend, but people are so thirsty for knowledge, they do it on their own. So it's a little bit of both.

Yeah. If it's clear and it's defined with their job and the need for their job, then it's paid in a lot of ways. OK. All right. Well, I don't want to keep you. I'm getting you out 45. So enjoy your evening.

If you've got questions, I'm here. If you want to contact me, you can do it through-- ooh, that's bad-- either through the Autodesk site or I've got business cards if anyone wants a card. And there you go. Have a good evening.

[APPLAUSE]