Executive Interview

with **Shalini Merugu**,
Director of Learning Solutions
CommLab India

Rapid eLearning:
The Game Changer in Corporate Training

About CommLab India

[CommLab India](#) has been ranked first among the top 10 rapid eLearning providers in the world since 2019. Started in 2000, the company has 100 International customers in 30+ countries.

With its formidable authoring tools expertise and decades of experience in corporate training and rapid eLearning solutions, CommLab India offers the following services to take online training to the next level.

- **ILT to eLearning Curriculums:** Convert Instructor-led Training (ILT) material into instructionally sound, visually appealing, engaging eLearning curriculums and digital formats such as microlearning, virtual classrooms, just-in-time job-aids and performance support tools.

- **Legacy Course Conversions:** Rejuvenate legacy courses (in Flash or any other authoring tool) and make them compatible with multiple devices and browsers by publishing them to HTML5.

- **eLearning Translations:** Translate English language master eLearning course into 35 international languages — both text and audio.

Recognition

CommLab India is a Brandon Hall Group™ Gold Preferred Provider.

The Brandon Hall Group™ Preferred Provider Program is specifically designed as a single source of truth that can validate your technology selection decisions.

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About Shalini Merugu

Shalini Merugu is a versatile learning design professional with more than 18 years of diverse experience in Instructional Design, Learner and User Assistance Solutions, and designing and delivering Customer Training.

She is passionate about working with customers in developing performance-enhancing learning experiences that achieve measurable business results. This includes analyzing customers' training needs, developing actionable roadmaps tailored to each client's unique requirements and creating creative strategies to maximize learning. She leverages the strengths of various modalities to design effective rapid eLearning, blended solutions and performance support materials.

Shalini conducts customer education workshops (both in-person and virtual) globally. Prior to CommLab India, she worked at various companies including General Electric and SumTotal Systems. Shalini has a master's degree in English Literature from the University of Hyderabad and a PG Diploma from The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad.

About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is Brandon Hall Group's Chief Operating Officer and Principal HCM Analyst. She is responsible for business operations, including client and member advisory services, marketing design, annual awards programs, conferences and the company's project management functions. She also leads Advancing Women in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, research and events. Rachel worked in the HCM research industry for 20+ years and held several key management and executive positions within the Talent and Learning Research, and Performance Improvement industries.

Q RACHEL

What is rapid eLearning?

A SHALINI

With upskilling and reskilling continuing to be the focus for L&D professionals the world over, everybody's in a hurry to get training done effectively, shorten the development time but still produce great results. This is where rapid eLearning comes in. It is the design, delivery and rollout of courses quickly, leveraging the power of authoring tools.

You can develop, design and roll out courses in a lot less time than it used to take traditionally and we cut out all the bells and whistles. It's a frill-free, robust course that we develop. eLearning programs traditionally used to take months but with rapid eLearning, you can hit the ground running with your design, delivery and rollout in as little as a couple of weeks. We use a lot of tools and techniques and processes to ensure that we are able to deliver courses at scale, at speed and at value.

Q RACHEL

What are some of the common myths about rapid eLearning?

A SHALINI

When this phrase hit the corporate learning scene, there was no consensus on what it really meant and it was highly debatable. For some people, rapid eLearning just meant using authoring tools and that was it — period. There was nothing more to it. For some others, it meant using authoring tools but churning out substandard courses.

One of the common myths is that, just because it's called rapid eLearning, you have to somehow cut corners with quality or with instruction design, which is not really true. Rapid eLearning, like any other form of training, is not effective if it is not rooted in sound Instructional Design. Organizations are now seeing the value of being able to roll out eLearnings quickly without it sacrificing the quality and creativity.

There was a time when rapid eLearning was seen as being relevant only for page-turners. You just quickly put these pages together in an authoring tool, publish it and there you go. We came from that era and started using these authoring tools and there was a temptation to just quickly start churning out courses simply because you could. But rapid eLearning is not really at the cost of creativity either and our courses are definitely not page-turners. We still use all those beautiful engagements and interactivities that are inbuilt into the tools, but we also apply sound Instructional Design principles, come up with very effective assessments and so on.

Q RACHEL

What place does Instructional Design have in rapid eLearning?

A SHALINI

Just because it's rapid doesn't mean that it's not built on sound Instructional Design principles and keeping Adult Learning in mind. A lot of organizations have now invested in rapid eLearning. The investment in technology has gone up with LMSs, LXPs and content-authoring tools. The effectiveness of the rapid eLearning course entirely depends on the skill sets of the Instructional Design team. This is not to discount all the other roles, but the heart and soul is still sound Instructional Design.

People no longer get skeptical when you use the word rapid. We use project management techniques. We use the efficiencies that come from the authoring tools, the templates and so on, to make sure that the development time is really shorter.

It starts right from framing the learning objectives and aligning your objectives to the desired performance, which in turn is aligned to the desired organizational results that the company is looking at. Without that alignment, no matter how great your course is, it's just a waste of training dollars. That alignment is something that happens at the ID end.

Q RACHEL

Is rapid eLearning only eLearning?

A SHALINI

A rapid eLearning course can take multiple formats. eLearning videos are a huge thing today. All of us can attest to the fact that we probably picked up a lot of skills just by watching a video. eLearning need not necessarily only be the kind of course that you and I have in mind with the regular eLearning course, but you can have videos with voiceovers and interactivity built in. Use that within an authoring tool so that it doesn't become a very passive viewing experience for our learners. Then plug in the videos, but also make sure that you're testing them. You're also giving them food for thought, asking them thought-provoking questions and so on. That way, it could just about take any form. It could take the form of performance support as well, including microlearning or mobile learning. It can be a traditional course but done in half the time and half the cost or it could take all these other formats.

That's what makes it so exciting. You're not stuck with the one-size-fits-all approach. You can just play around with all these digital assets that are now entirely at your disposal. Typically, every training manager, every L&D professional, now is armed with a toolkit.

Q RACHEL

What are rapid eLearning accelerators?

A SHALINI

We have what we call our four R's. These are our strategies for developing rapid eLearning. One of them is the Redesign. You look at existing classroom materials and then you decide whether you are going to redesign them as virtual instructor-led training materials or eLearning modules or curriculums and/or blended learning.

Another is the Record option, where we have a very quick and dirty PowerPoint put together by a subject matter expert. They walk through explanations of the slides by recording themselves on audio. It's then sent back to the eLearning partner. We design the slides, clean up the transcribed script, send it back, get a sign-off and then we do it with a professional voiceover. Now you have a beautiful PowerPoint with design slides and the voice of the SME in the sense, their stories, their anecdotal information, or whatever makes the training come alive. And this is a quick solution for videos.

Another thing we can do is Rebuild. We can rebuild existing courses as microlearning. With time being such a huge challenge more today than ever before, the best way to give your content a new lease of life and get more learner adoption is to break it up, take a good look at your courses, decide what can be broken down into microlearning modules and use them.

The last one is Republishing your existing courses for mobile compatibility. Authoring tools allow you to precisely do that across any device, across any platform. You just have to tweak the content a little, because you would want to keep it simple when it comes to mobile learning, given the limitations of the screen space and the various devices that learners will use to access.

The good news is there are so many accelerators for that. Even if you're hard-pressed for time and you don't have time to go and do R&D out there, just exploring your tool opens up a whole range of possibilities. So that is one accelerator. Every tool comes with libraries. If you're going to be doing a series of courses for a given branding, with a given look and feel, with a given theme even, you can create your own, you can modify those templates and have your own ready-built, ready-made library, your asset library, your image library, etc.

(continued)

The other exciting thing which we can use to accelerate our design and development is using artificial intelligence — right from content curation to framing suitable learning objectives, to framing assessments, to suggesting and recommending images, right down to recording the audio. Of course, there is no substitute for a human. A human who knows how to leverage these AI tools can capitalize on the rapid part of rapid eLearning.

Here are some ways to listen to the interview on Brandon Hall Group's Excellence at Work Podcast:

iTunes   Spotify   YouTube

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EXCELLENCE AT WORK

About Brandon Hall Group™

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 30 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group™ is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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SOME WAYS WE CAN HELP

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recognizes world-class HCM programs that transform their organization and achieve breakthrough results. This designation is the next step beyond the HCM Excellence Awards, which focus on a single program, and looks at the department as a whole.

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