

Why nonprofits are seriously interested in eLearning tech



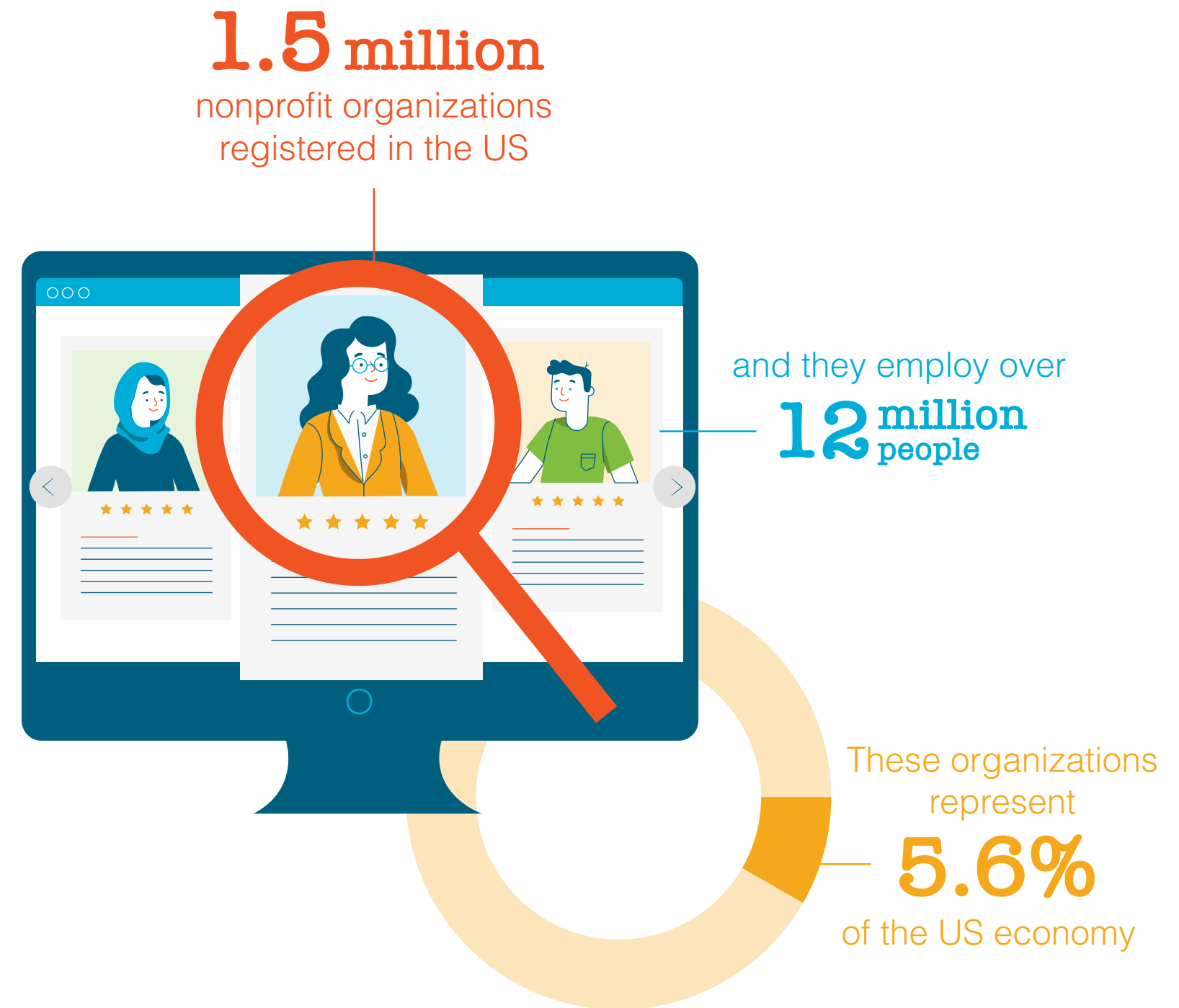
Why nonprofits are turning to better learning tech

Nonprofits are an often overlooked, but massively important part of the business marketplace with over **1.5 million** organizations employing over **12 million** people in the US alone. The success of these organizations impacts the economy in a big way because they represent **5.6% of the US economy**. Although their business structure differs from other kinds of organizations, many of the struggles they face are similar to a typical for-profit company.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues its lasting impact on the ways that nonprofits operate, affected by the wake of lockdowns and working from home conditions. For example, leadership changes may result in new perspectives about spending on learning technology.

Many organizations are recognizing the benefits of eLearning technology to deliver training to employees wherever they may call the workplace. Remote employees and hybrid workplaces have exposed the need for better learning technology. A well-thought learning strategy and sound business case for investment in learning technology can ultimately benefit the nonprofit's mission.

While the need for better eLearning technology was born out of necessity, there are many reasons that nonprofit organizations are becoming more seriously interested in learning management systems.



We're not so different, you & me...



Through a certain lens, both nonprofits and for-profit organizations look quite similar when it comes to their learning needs. Both have a constant need to onboard new employees, close any knowledge or skills gaps, and roll out any new learning objectives. Both are frequently tackling compliance training requirements, especially nonprofits as some are heavily regulated by government agencies. As the organization grows, compliance training can be difficult to scale without the help of process automation.

However, nonprofit organizations often have specific requirements due to their nature that make having a modern learning solution critical. For example, the organization may need employees with specialized skill levels but can't simply hire their way out of a skills deficit. The goal is to deliver training to their employees, partners and volunteers through unified training programs that ensure that every team member is on the same page.

Naturally, the pandemic served to complicate things for nonprofits. The desire for more employees to work from home (WFH) was exclusive to for-profit companies, as more nonprofit employees shifted to remote workers. Reaching these learners was a new challenge for some organizations. It created the need for better analytics for leadership to understand where the organization is progressing and what needs attention.

Despite these challenges, nonprofit organizations have seen a 4.1% growth rate this past year.

For some organizations that transitioned to a remote workforce, fewer employees are based locally, yet they expanded their access to a larger talent pool. Not only that, but the average nonprofit audience, workforce, volunteers, and sponsors could be increasingly global.

Cultural differences in nonprofits

While nonprofits are not a homogenous group, some important commonalities among them make their need for a better LMS high. Let's look at a few cultural differences that set nonprofits apart from their for-profit counterparts:

- ▶ **Generally, nonprofits offer their employees lower salaries because of their structure.**
- ▶ **Because they operate on less funding, those who work in the nonprofit sector often face the stressful realities of doing more with fewer people.**
- ▶ **In the modern world, the nonprofit workforce is often scattered around the country, making management more of a challenge.**

A unique advantage that many nonprofits enjoy is the higher degree of employee engagement they often find in their people. Employees feeling empowered to support the common goal can often provide the necessary leeway around higher compensation or perks they might encounter in the for-profit sector. Employee engagement in every organization is crucial, but more so in the nonprofit world where efficiencies and cooperation are integral to success.

Building effective learning programs to reinforce that engagement is a must. Using the right learning technology can help equip people to effectively carry out their mission. With this in mind, leaders need to be connected to their employees (wherever they are) to gauge if burnout is approaching.

An overly complicated and depersonalized learning and development process can contribute to employee burnout or stress. This is why many organizations are recognizing the need for better learning technology to deliver personalized learning experiences.





Using learning tech to adapt and thrive in a nonprofit world

Nonprofits are no stranger to adapting to the changing economy, which requires some creativity and perseverance. Some organizations are finding revenue streams in unexpected places, like with their eLearning technology. By using their existing training or learning content libraries, they're able to reach learners outside the organization. Any stream of revenue is valuable, so selling access to custom learning content or offering certifications through their learning solution could be a smart move.

For any nonprofit organization, inefficiency can cost them valuable money and be the difference between staying competitive or falling short. Let's look at a quick example where Brainier was able to make a big difference by eliminating inefficiencies.

Riverside County EMS in California implemented an eLearning delivery of their annual certification and updated training program instead of traditional, in-person training. This was necessary for two reasons: COVID protocols and cost-savings of both fiscal and human capital. The solution was to deliver an asynchronous, online model instead of asking employees to travel to a location.

“Having our own learning management platform will help us accomplish our goal of targeted education with the means to ensure compliance.”

- Dustin R., Riverside County EMS Specialist & Paramedic.

Ongoing challenges to note



Operating in the nonprofit sector will always come with its challenges but empowering your learners with a robust LMS and aligning your learning programs with the greater organizational objectives can make all the difference. The first step, however, is to recognize potential obstacles and be prepared for them.

Achieving management buy-in:

Best practices for learning leaders, nonprofits and otherwise, include creating and demonstrating a strong business case for every learning objective. Moving L&D beyond a line item in an organization's expenses to a legitimate business tool, capable of navigating the way through change, is one way of garnering buy-in from the management team. This may be difficult as the executive's job is frequently one of controlling new expenses at all costs (pardon the pun).

Once buy-in has been achieved, learning must be continually evaluated and its success demonstrated through clear and meaningful reporting metrics to retain that buy-in. One of the best ways to do this is to prove that the investment will ultimately help the bottom line in the long run through cost savings.

In a recent conversation, one Minnesota-based nonprofit Brainier customer noted, "We are an organization that is heavily regulated, so the ability to track compliance is critical. It is important to balance staff development with staff productivity... if I can tie proficiency in a training topic to benefiting our client that is usually a win."





Showing value in eLearning tech year-over-year:

Investing in technology can support the mission, but that means that strategy is in constant need of refinement. Calculating the savings in human capital due to process automation in the LMS is a direct line to controlling costs. Providing better oversight for managers as well as finding other process improvements can translate to more bandwidth devoted to the Mission.

As more nonprofits embrace an online presence, it makes sense to use technology to reach learners. That expanding audience could include employees, sponsors, donors, and even customers. Using an eCommerce tool could help to generate revenue through certifications, access to training, or fundraising efforts.

Retaining employees

Employee turnover has always been the main concern in the nonprofit sector, especially in the heightened tension of the Great Resignation and the potential economic downturn. According to the Society for Human Resource Management the **voluntary turnover rate** for nonprofit organizations is 19%. Compare this to the overall labor market turnover rate of 12%.

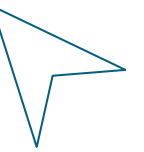
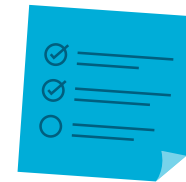
While both figures are based on pre-pandemic data, there is a clear disparity in retaining employees. A highly personalized learning program focusing on employee engagement and better eLearning technology can increase employee retention and also positively impact the retention rate of much-needed volunteers, donors, sponsors and customers.

Why attitudes are changing

Even outside of the nonprofit sector, employee and volunteer attitudes are changing. For example, more staff are comfortable working remotely. In fact, **more nonprofit volunteers are digital** these days, which was relatively rare, even as recent as three years ago.

As organizations change to accommodate shifting expectations, leadership may also begin to restructure. Leaders stepping into a role in the nonprofit world may tend to have more experience in the for-profit sector. Because of this, they could bring a new perspective that sees the value in investing in learning technology.

Another example of the changing industry attitudes can be seen in the digital transformation that is occurring. Following suit, nonprofits are increasingly recognizing the gains in efficiency that can be had in new learning technology as a net benefit that supports the mission. All of these factors come together to solidify and unite teams with a common ground through efficient learning.





Moving into the future with confidence

The future of nearly every organization will be decided by how well it can adapt to constant change. Nonprofit organizations are not exempt from many of the challenges faced by companies today yet must also be mindful of not deviating from the mission. The complications from the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in the workplace and the workforce have helped to underline the urgency of employing better learning technology, but there is still progress to be made.

Learning leaders can overcome objections and generate buy-in with the management team by making a clear business case for investing in learning and development technology and ultimately demonstrating how it can support the mission.

With Brainier, organizations of any size, industry, or complexity of the organization chart can create personalized learning experiences for their employees, customers, volunteers, and more. The Brainier LMS offers ways to customize the learning experience and build learning tracks to help your employees and volunteers see their future and thrive. From compliance training to mobile learning and access to valuable learning analytics, Brainier is here to help your organization navigate the future through learning.

See how The Brainier LMS can help your organization.

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