Digital Collaboration in the Age of Online Training

→ **The Power of AirClass**
A White Paper for Corporate Trainers

Overview

If there's one challenge every corporate trainer faces, it's this:

Creating a collaborative online training experience—one that incorporates the same benefits as in-person, face-to-face communication—is hard.

The perks of in-person training have not always translated well to virtual settings, due in part to the limitations of commonly-used web conferencing and videoconferencing tools:

- **A lack of feedback:** With no way to measure when participants are engaged or how they're responding to content, it's impossible for trainers to create the feedback loops that are vital to success.

- **Limited collaboration:** Without the ability to discuss course content in real time, it's virtually impossible to replicate interactive classroom-style communication in online environments.

- **A loss of insight:** One-way screen sharing and faceless dial-ins make it difficult, if not impossible, to see beyond the screen and understand how participants are engaging with training materials.

And yet today's employees don't just expect better online training—they demand it. As much as **70% of surveyed employees say they feel corporate training technology and tools fall short when compared to personal technology.**

Thankfully, there is a solution.

New and emerging virtual training software features are transforming the way corporate training can be conducted in online environments. Rather than simply sharing screens or conferencing in, participants can experience a true-to-life training environment that improves the in-person experience.

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Introduction

Years ago, most corporate training followed the same basic format: Gather a group of employees into a single room decked out with an array of learning aids: a podium, rows or pods of chairs, dry erase boards, projectors, workbooks, printed memos and more. The budgets it took to fund these events and cover costs associated with travel and time away from work were significant.

Then, around the turn of the century, web conferencing became widely available. Videoconferencing followed close behind. Corporate trainers now had an opportunity to virtualize professional development using webcams and recorded audio sessions.

It didn't take long for inconsistencies in these two dissimilar types of training environments— in-room versus online—to surface. Transitioning from face-to-face discourse to online settings proved challenging, as did the lack of efficient tools for interacting with participants beyond the live trainings.

This is a real problem, because the benefits of strong virtual training are undeniable. Constructive online learning environments have been shown to increase depth of analysis and encourage more participation.[1] And as members of the modern workforce demand more online opportunities for professional development, organizations that fail to adapt risk obsolescence.

What's a corporate trainer to do?

This white paper serves to help corporate trainers understand the complexities of the current landscape and offer a new, immersive way to navigate the virtual classroom with AirClass from Lenovo Software.

Corporate Training as Game Changer

When it comes to business growth, the one variable that consistently results in greater productivity and profitability is employee engagement. The extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs and committed to their companies is directly correlated with organizational success.

A trained employee is an engaged employee—and companies with engaged employees outperform the competition by as much as 202%.[2] He clicks and swipes his way through enterprise software with precision and speed; she responds to customer inquiries with ease.

Countless studies show how trained, engaged teams impact revenue and reach goals faster. In one Gallup study of nearly 200 organizations, companies with the highest levels of employee engagement were 22% more profitable and 21% more productive than those with low levels of engagement. Companies with high and sustainable levels of engagement also have operating margins up to three times higher than those with low or unsustainable levels.[3]

But even as organizations continue to devote budgets to learning and development (L&D) initiatives, only 13% of employees worldwide are actually engaged at work, and 340 million are "actively disengaged."[4]

This disconnect can be attributed largely to gaps in corporate training. For example: One three-year research project revealed that 74% of workers feel they're not achieving their full potential, with nine out of 10 stressing the importance of workplace training.[5] In another nationwide survey, 70% of respondents said training and professional development opportunities impact their decisions to stay with a company.[6]

It's not a lack of funding that's causing difficulties. One survey from Corporate Visions shows that 65% of companies plan to increase investments in virtual training. Likewise, Training Magazine's latest state of the industry report shows that 37% of training budgets are increasing while 50% remain unchanged.[7]

But while companies are spending more per learner, they're providing fewer hours of training—due in part to declines in face-to-face instruction. According to Training Magazine, just 41% of training hours are now delivered by stand-and-deliver trainers in classroom settings, down from 46% the year before.

The result of online training deficiencies: $13.5 million lost to insufficient skillsets, disengaged employees and turnover—per year, per every 1,000 employees.[8]

The Shifting Landscape of Corporate Training

Although the types of training employees need to improve performance hasn't changed significantly in recent years, there's been a noticeable shift in how they prefer to receive that training.

This shift has come in four primary waves:
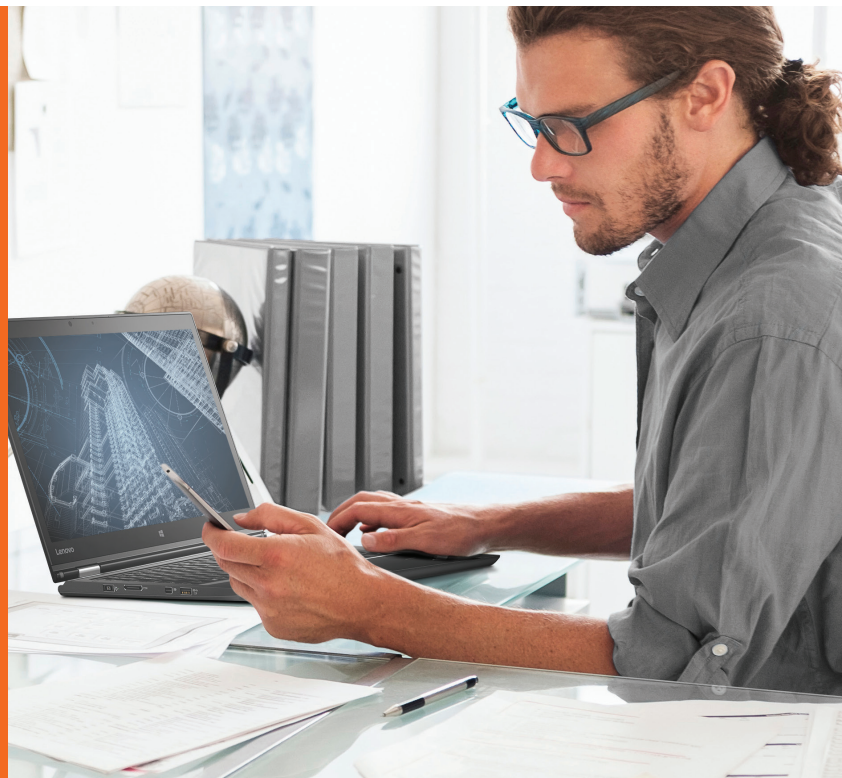
1 The Exodus Toward Online Learning

The consumerism of technology means people want access to the same online experiences at work that they enjoy in their personal lives, and professional development is no exception. Not surprisingly, much of today's tech-savvy modern workforce shows a preference for online corporate training. Millennials—the first generation of digital natives, born between 1980 and 2000—are influencing many organizations to replace traditional training programs with more bite-sized, easy-to-digest forms of online corporate learning.[9]

But it's not just millennials who are leading this transition toward self-directed, on-demand training. One 2015 survey found that baby boomers spend more time consuming online content than any other generation.[10] And across age groups and experience levels, 70% of employees say they feel corporate technology and training tools fall short when compared to personal technology.[11]

2 The Rise of the Learning Worker

Many businesses today are driven by a new generation of "learning workers." Rather than coming to jobs fully equipped with a long list of qualifications, these highly adaptable employees are skilled at learning as they go and advancing expertise through on-the-job training. Their greatest assets are their abilities to apply new knowledge to different situations and issues.[12]

Alongside the growth of learning workers comes the arrival of learning organizations—companies that are driven less by sets of long-standing processes and more by opportunities for collaboration and innovation. If L&D was a core component of success for organizations before round-the-clock technology consumption, it's a must-have today.

3 The Transformation of Cognitive Needs

Once seen as an optional add-on, virtual training is fast becoming a necessity for meeting the cognitive needs of today's employees. The reason: One side effect of digitized lifestyles is shortened attention spans. Social scientists are discovering evidence that people are now wired to absorb information for 10 to 18 minutes before the brain begins to tune out.[13] (In one 2015 study, humans were able to concentrate for less time than goldfish.[14])

The more information an audience is asked to consume all at once, the more intense the mental load becomes. Eventually, this "cognitive backlog" can become so heavy that listeners drop it and fail to remember anything at all.[15]

In other words: Big budgets for high-stakes, hours-long training programs that involve travel, meals and time away from work may actually hinder performance as attendees begin to mentally check-out.

4 The Need for Feedback Loops

One of the most effective ways to improve performance is through feedback loops. Learners and trainers who have access to real-time insights on their actions are better able to change behaviors in meaningful ways than those who simply conduct or attend a training. For example, the trainer who can identify precisely when trainees become confused will know which course content to adjust (and what will happen if nothing changes).

More than four decades of research have revealed four distinct stages of effective feedback loops:

1. Data that's effectively measured, captured and stored as evidence;

2. A process for relaying this raw data in a format that makes it emotionally resonant with the individual;

3. An understanding of what the consequences of inaction will be; and

4. Reactions to the data that can then be measured again to continue the loop of feedback. Each cycle stimulates new behaviors and inches individuals closer to their goals.[16]

For training to be truly effective, it must incorporate each of these elements.

Bottom line:

A key indicator of success in the modern workplace is not corporate training in and of itself, but rather an organization's ability to successfully transition mission-critical training programs to the right online environment where content can be consumed in a convenient, digestible manner that improves outcomes for trainers and participants alike.

Limitations of Online Learning

In moving classroom training to virtual environments, the primary options presented to companies in recent years have involved web conferencing, videoconferencing and chat tools—a mix of solutions that is often unreliable and cumbersome. These tools were designed with corporate *meetings*, rather than classes, in mind.

As a result, they present a number of limitations when used for corporate training purposes, including:

▶ Lack of feedback

With many virtual environments, there's no way to gauge levels of engagement. Audio sessions eliminate the ability to assess many nonverbal cues, while large group videoconferencing—which typically tiles dozens of faces onto a single screen—makes it difficult to focus on any one person at a time. This can lead to a lack of actionable, meaningful insights on how training sessions are being received and who's engaged. Post-training evaluation surveys are an option, but require additional time and resources and often lack the right sample sizes to be scientifically valid.

▶ Limited collaboration

Many web conferencing and videoconferencing tools allow participants to exchange instant chat messages during meetings. However, even when presented with the option to archive chat logs for later perusal, there is no way for trainers and employees to engage with these discussions after a live session has ended. Without the ability to discuss course content in real time, interactive classroom-style communication is virtually impossible in these online settings.

▶ A loss of insight

Despite the ubiquity of webcams, little has been done to leverage this technology to provide trainers with a way to understand what's happening on the other side of the screen and learn how participants are engaging with course content.

With studies showing that interactive online activities are six times more effective than one-way instruction, facilitators stand to reap some big rewards from a virtual training solution designed to solve these problems.[17]

The Power of AirClass
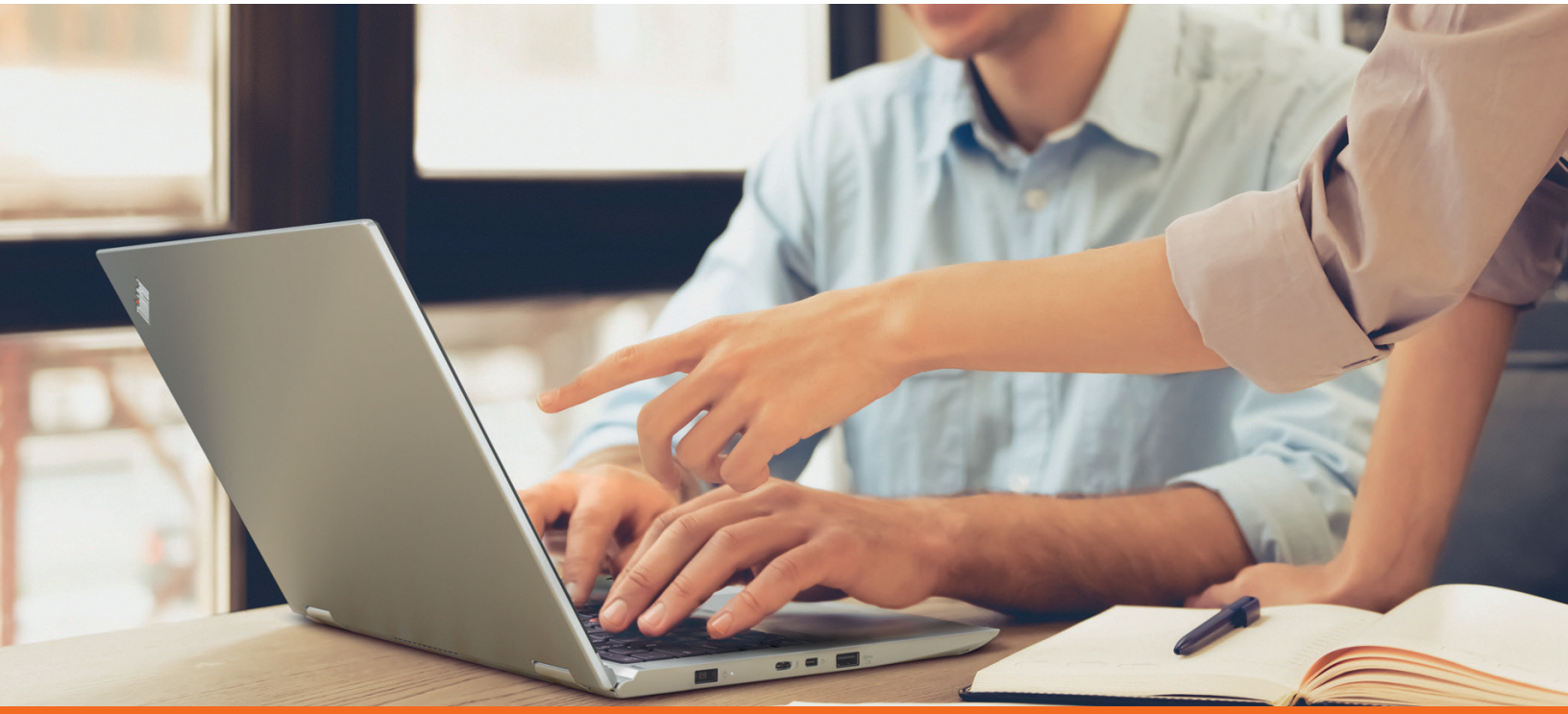
Virtual Training for Modern Learning

What did people really think about a corporate class? Did they absorb all of the material or become confused? Are there certain areas where participants became distracted? What did they love most about the training?

Answers to these questions and others like them have long eluded corporate trainers— until now.
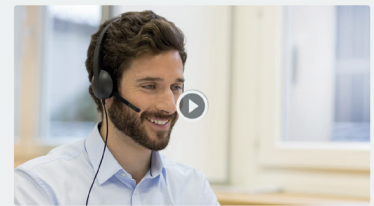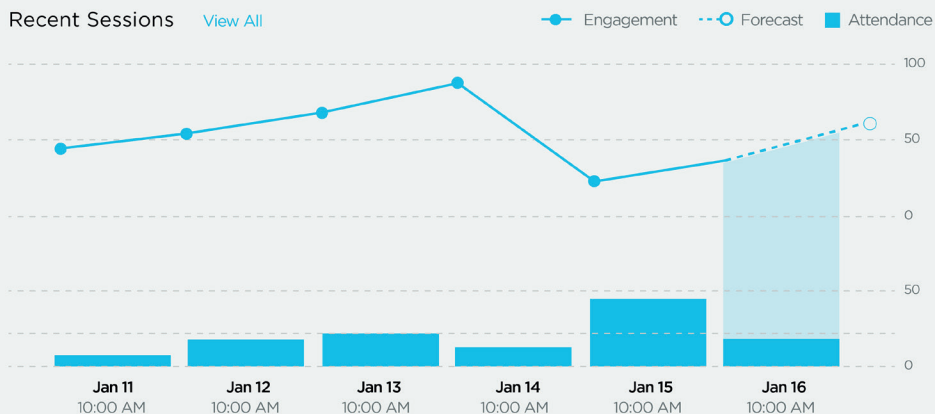
AirClass empowers corporate trainers to transform online learning into a collaborative experience with "smart" features designed specifically for virtual training. From participation meters to engagement scores, this solution from Lenovo Software offers an array of features that allow corporate trainers to see beyond the screen.

ENGAGEMENT SCORES

Engagement Scores allow trainers to create feedback loops with actionable data that measures true engagement of each class and its individuals participants. The AirClass engagement score combines multiple indicators such as watching a presentation, participating in chat, contributing to a whiteboard, answering a poll question and more. The resulting engagement scores are continuously updated as the live virtual training progresses, and combined in post-training reports that can be used to continually improve course content and delivery.

BREAKOUT ROOMS

Breakout Rooms enable trainers to facilitate deeper discussions in small group settings, where anyone can be a presenter and lead the discussion. Participants are broken out into small groups based on their live engagement scores to ensure each room has sufficient levels of activity.

Recent Sessions View All

Engagement   Forecast   Attendance

100
50
0
50
0

| Jan 11 | Jan 12 | Jan 13 | Jan 14 | Jan 15 | Jan 16 |
| 10:00 AM | 10:00 AM | 10:00 AM | 10:00 AM | 10:00 AM | 10:00 AM |

Core Concepts - Day Two
Tuesday January 17th @ 9:45 AM

22 Students attended
DOWNLOAD REPORT

65 Engagement score
Average

Upcoming Sessions View All

SCRUM Essentials
Sprints
📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

Star this class now?
[Start Class]   Enter classroom

SCRUM Essentials
User Stories
📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

Star this class now?
[Start Class]   Enter classroom

SCRUM Essentials
Product Backlog
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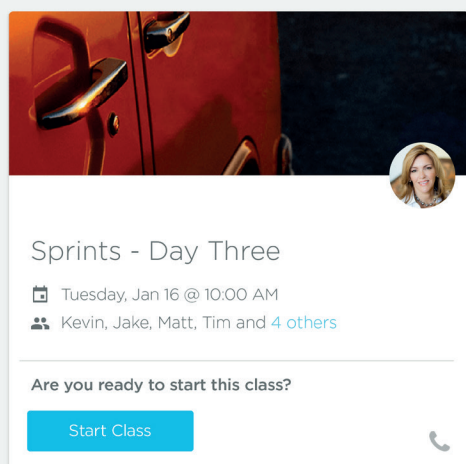👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

Star this class now?
[Start Class]   Enter classroom

EMOTION INSIGHTS

Emotion Insights uses advanced facial recognition technology to map 68 points on the face and record emotions like confusion and happiness. This emotion recognition data is displayed as aggregated, anonymous results along with recorded replays so trainers can see exactly when participants are excited, uninterested, confused and more. It's the easiest, surest way to take a good class and make it even better.

WHITEBOARDS AND ANNOTATIONS

Whiteboards and Annotations allow entire online classes to contribute to a single whiteboard simultaneously and see what others are adding in real time. Annotated video comments further support collaborative conversations in place of one-way screen-shares.
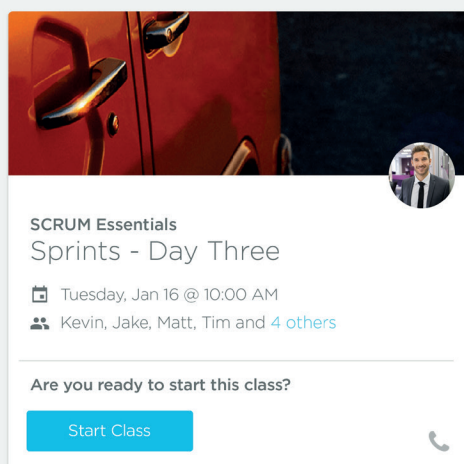

Sprints - Day Three

📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

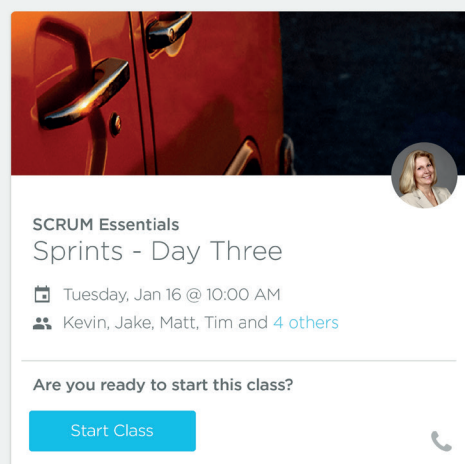**Are you ready to start this class?**

Start Class

SCRUM Essentials
Sprints - Day Three

📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

Are you ready to start this class?

Start Class

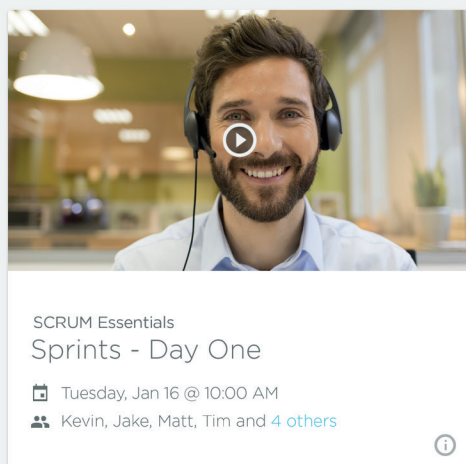SCRUM Essentials
Sprints - Day Three

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Are you ready to start this class?

Start Class

Past Sessions

SCRUM Essentials
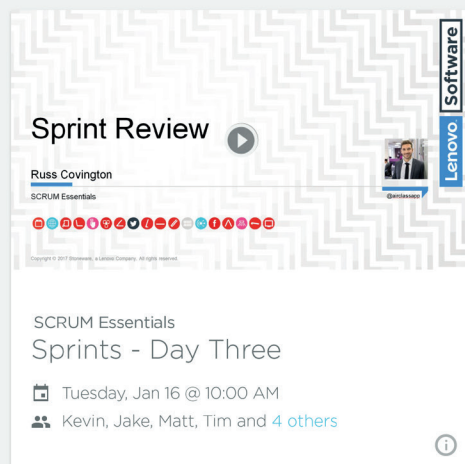Sprints - Day One

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👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

SCRUM Essentials
Sprints - Day Two

📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

Sprint Review
Russ Covington
SCRUM Essentials

SCRUM Essentials
Sprints - Day Three

📅 Tuesday, Jan 16 @ 10:00 AM
👥 Kevin, Jake, Matt, Tim and 4 others

REPLAY

Replay allows trainers and participants to "relive" the training just as if they were attending the live event. This allows employees to learn at their own preferred paces and in the settings that are most productive for each individual. Trainers see collective Engagement Scores and Emotion Insights as the Replay progresses, while particpants/trainees can follow chats and shared documents in the same order they were shared the first time around.

ACTIVITY STREAM

Activity Stream lets trainers and trainees/participants access and update documents, photos, videos and comments at any time, even when class is not in session. These streams serve as virtual classrooms that are always in session, encouraging collaboration before, during and after the live event. Corporate training doesn't start and stop, but rather carries on in a continually-updated environment where collaboration becomes second nature.

Put simply, AirClass is online training as it should be: Trainers can execute with ease while participants navigate at the paces and in the places that are most productive for them.
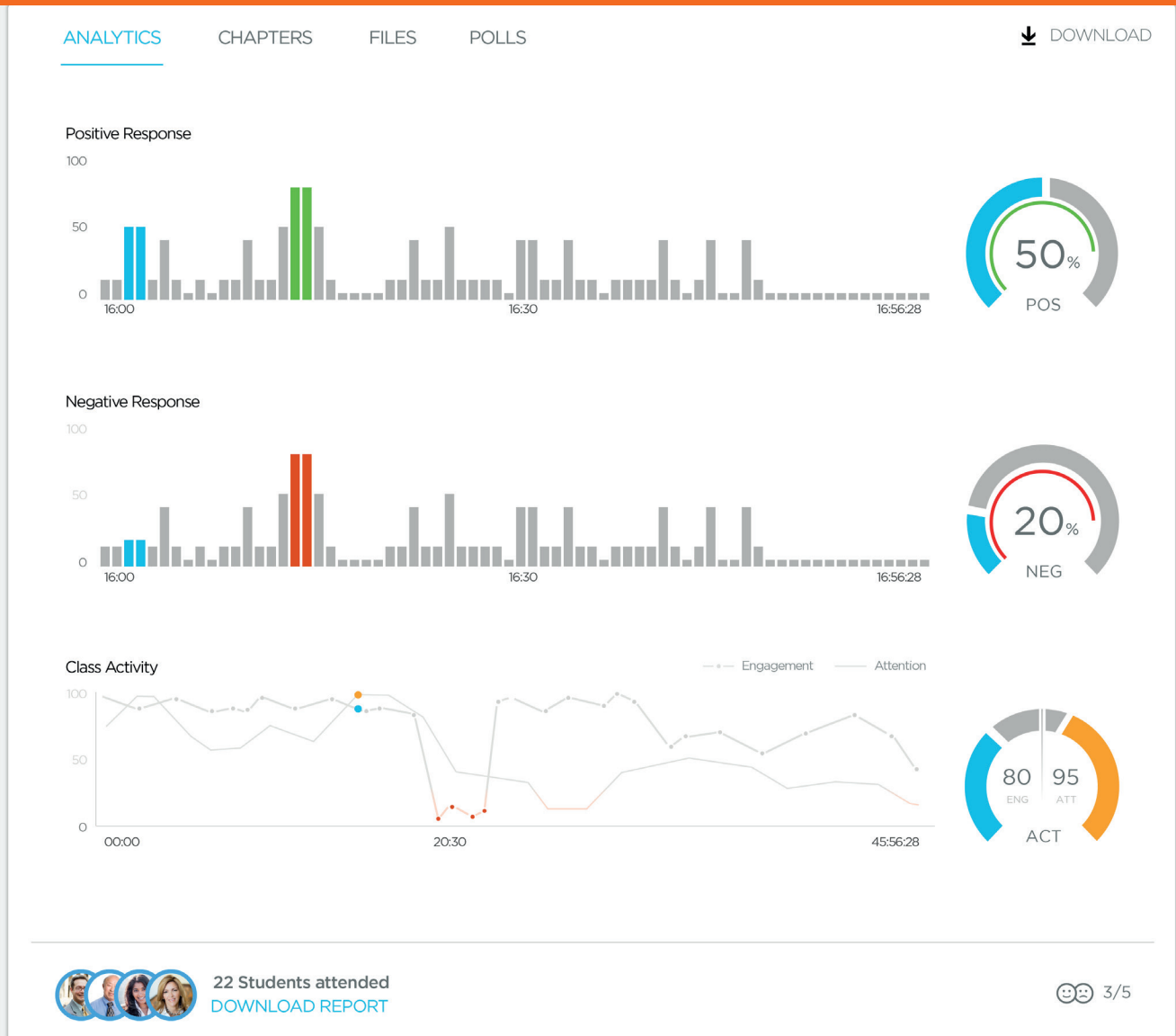
Conclusion

As the proclivity for online corporate learning grows, the need for on-demand, collaborative virtual environments will continue to increase. Trained, engaged employees are driving the growth of businesses today—and are increasingly relying on technology to improve job-related knowledge. AirClass offers a unique new solution that solves many of the inherent limitations of web and video conferencing, opening doors to better corporate learning, longer-lasting business relationships and greater returns on training investments.

About AirClass

AirClass is a virtual training solution from Lenovo Software designed for modern learning. AirClass is designed to make it feel like participants are in the room with you, and provides insights that let trainers see beyond the screen to accurately read emotions and measure engagement. Real-time polling, virtual whiteboarding, video annotating, activity streams, breakout rooms and other features keep everyone actively involved.

Try it free for 30 days at AirClass.com

About Lenovo

AirClass is part of the Lenovo Software family of tools designed to solve today's biggest corporate and classroom challenges. Parent company Lenovo is a $46 billion global Fortune 500 company and a leader in providing innovative consumer, commercial and enterprise technology. Our portfolio of high-quality, secure products and services covers PCs (including the legendary Think and multimode YOGA brands), workstations, servers, storage, smart TVs and a family of mobile products such as smartphones (including the Moto brand), tablets and apps.

Resources

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