# Three new trends affecting training providers

Keeping track of the latest research into learning styles can feel like an arduous task, especially in the current climate of rapidly developing technologies, demanding learners and complex national frameworks. And while classic learning styles have a useful place in creating online training, the changing face of learners and learning environments has rendered rigidly sticking to any specific model obsolete. To help, we've brought together three key ideas.
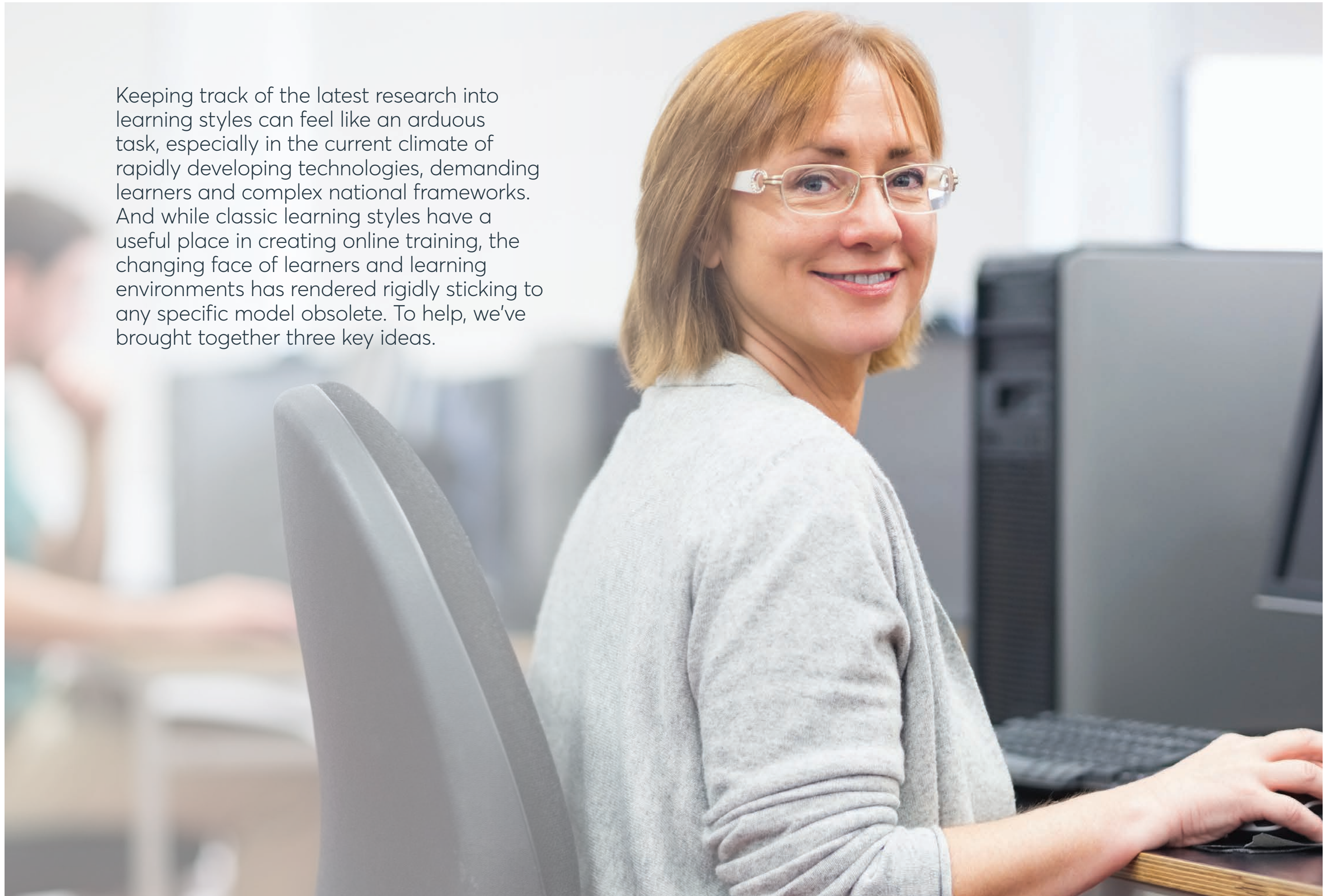
1.

Curiosity and on-demand learners

By now, you'll have read about your learner as a digital consumer – someone who is used to easily accessible information at the touch of a button. While some might argue this makes life harder for training providers, it also means contemporary learners are more used to satisfying – and maintaining – their own curiosity. Tools like search engines and social media platforms facilitate learners in directing their own knowledge consumption and application, and this natural curiosity can also be satisfied through e-learning.

Some researchers believe a learner's self-motivation can be consistently encouraged, and therefore their interest in learning regularly renewed, by recognising their innate curiosity and providing 'thematic scaffolding'. These are areas of educational content that learners can explore freely in their own way; however, e-learning that forces learners down a particular path and doesn't allow choice (even within the smallest of constraints) can turn off users who are used to getting the information they want, exactly when and how they want it.

2.

The new tutor

In the last few years, the role of the tutor in workplace and online learning has changed significantly. Rather than being an expert 'broadcaster' of knowledge, tutors now have to inhabit many roles as coach, mentor, peer and even learner. Learners at work may be untethered from a particular location or working pattern, making the role of tutor an important connecting force between them and the organisation. Similarly, as learners self-direct their education, they are beginning to create their own learning networks in which there is no longer one tutor, but many.

For some tutors working with training providers, this shift can be difficult; despite their subject matter expertise, 'teaching' in this contemporary way may prove challenging. Tutors are now required to be flexible and empathic, responding to the changing needs of learners, session to session. The most effective methods to ensure this in your organisation are to 'train the trainer' and provide them with pedagogically sound materials, which facilitate successful tutoring, as well as successful learning.

3.

Learning together

While the impetus within an organisation may be to digitise qualifications, it's important to recognise effective traditional and blended methods of learning – and give them a contemporary twist. Small, face-to-face study groups help students instigate learning and motivate each other; the modern-day equivalent includes specific groups on social media or online forums where larger cohorts of students can take part in peer-to-peer learning.

As an e-learning partner, we've seen that learners are relying more and more on their personal networks to direct their education, and they expect employer-based learning to facilitate this more social way of learning. This method of 'learning together' can be incredibly effective. Learners are not learning to be passive receptacles of knowledge that can be memorised and repeated, but rather they are learning to be knowledgeable people who can apply what they've learnt. Through conversation and shared experiences, learners are embedding knowledge very deeply – especially when this process is combined with scenario-based learning.

For more resources to help you
understand the e-learning landscape,
you can visit our website:
www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources

Sources
Entrepreneurial learning in the networked age by M. Senges, J. S. Brown and H. Rheingold:
https://www.raco.cat/index.php/Paradigmes/article/viewFile/225695/307064
5 New Teaching Methods Improving Education by E. Day:
http://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/10/5-new-teaching-methods-improving-education
Learning Styles by M. Gorzycki:
https://ctfd.sfsu.edu/content/learning-styles
Virtual College's own research into delivering digital qualifications to contemporary learners.

Virtual College
Marsel House
Stephensons Way
Ilkley
West Yorkshire
LS29 8DD

+44 (0)1943 605 976
virtual-college.co.uk