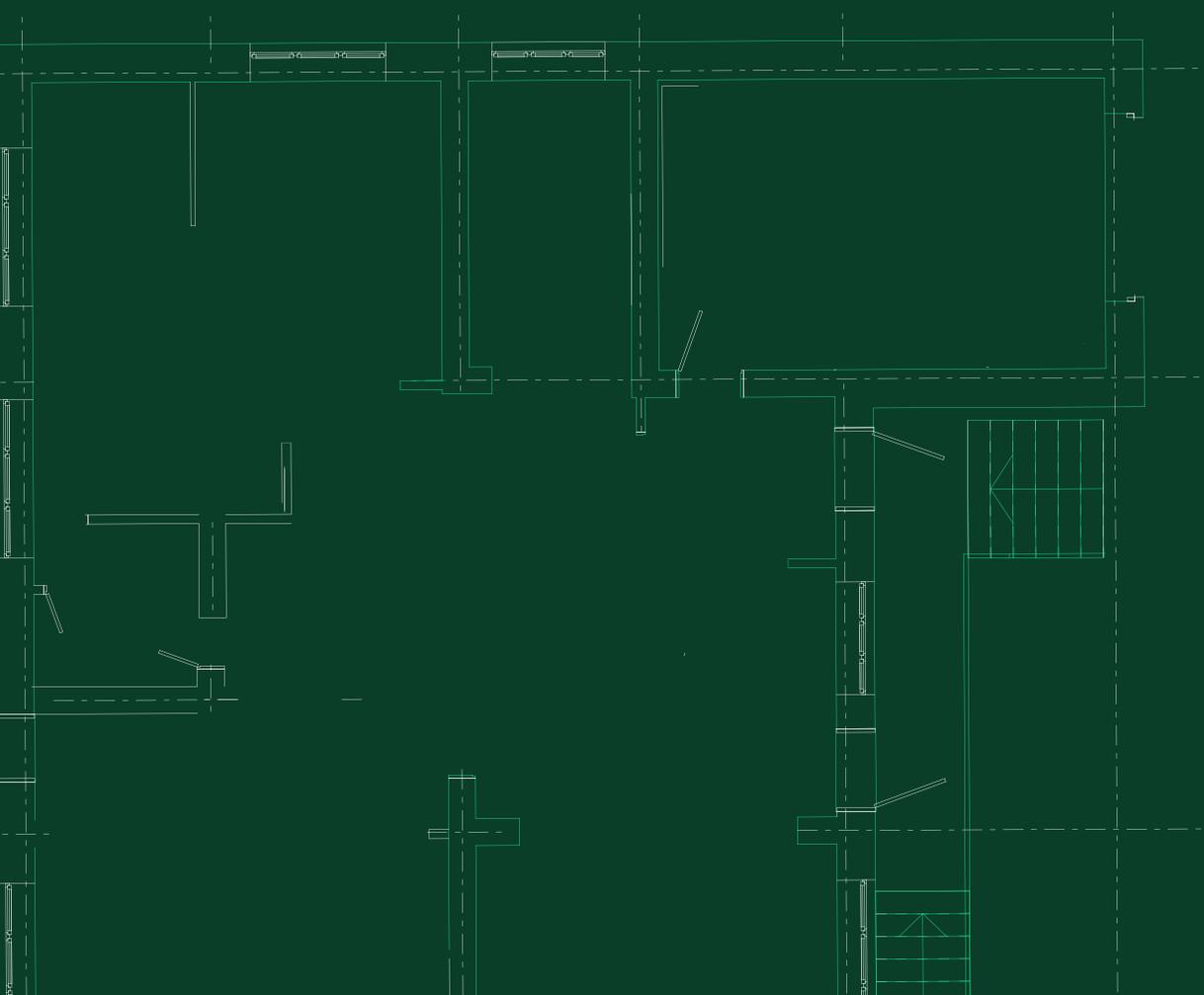# skillable

# Modernize your enablement:

## The blueprints for revenue-driving renovations.

### Inside, find out:

▸ How to achieve the SaaS Growth Trifecta.

▸ Sandboxes vs. virtual labs – what's the difference?

▸ The top 5 use cases for hands-on labs.

# The case for maturing technical enablement across sales, customers and partners.

## Is an outdated, unscalable enablement program holding your organization back?

Whether you built your organization's training program from the ground up or inherited it from someone else, it's likely that a lot has changed since the foundation was poured and the walls were put in place. The SaaS landscape is changing even faster than home design, so chances are it's time to renovate your enablement programs to scale faster. In fact, your revenue and growth depend on it.

Outdated technical enablement programs for sales, customers and partners have direct business impacts like customer churn, longer sales cycles and increased support costs. It's six to seven times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing customer. In addition to being a key indicator of company health, customer retention is a key revenue driver. A five percent increase in customer retention can increase company revenue by a whopping 25% to 95%.

**A well-designed customer success program can yield a 91% ROI over a three-year period.[1]**

**To combat customer churn, organizations need to accelerate time to value. Fast.**

### The SaaS Growth Trifecta.

Faster time to value

Improved product adoption

Increased utilization

■ Increased customer retention and revenue
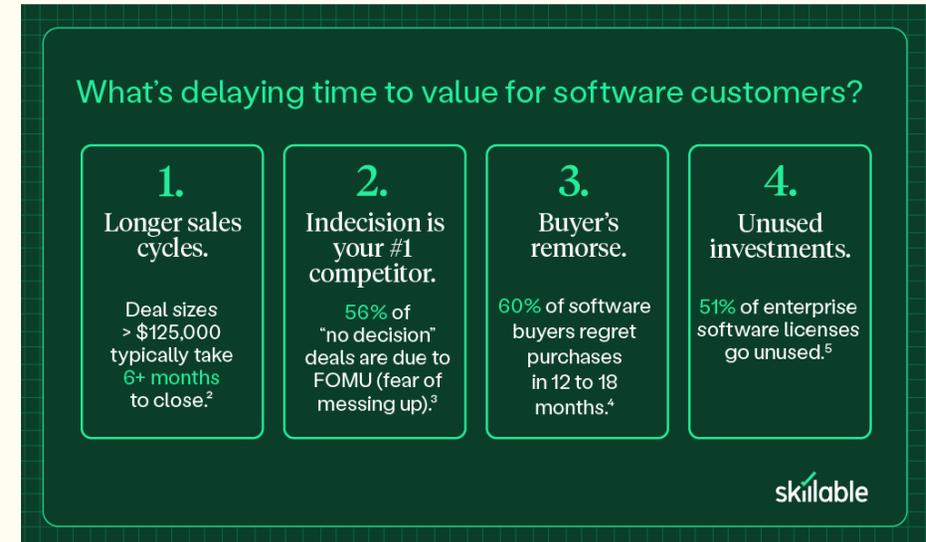■ Modern customer and technical enablement

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Time to value (TTV) is the time it takes for a customer to realize the benefits of using your software or product. It's a critical metric for SaaS companies, product management professionals, customer success teams and even executives. You're likely already tracking it in some form, as it influences customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty and advocacy. The faster you can deliver value to your customers, the more likely they are to stick with you, use more of your features, build trust, upgrade to higher plans and refer others to your solution.

However, achieving a fast and effective TTV isn't easy. SaaS customers face many challenges and barriers when adopting new software leading to delayed TTV and increased customer churn. According to the SaaS Management Index, companies averaged $18M in annual license waste in 2023 – a 7% increase from 2022 – and are only using half (49%) of their provisioned licenses.

### What's delaying time to value for software customers?

**1.**
Longer sales cycles.

Deal sizes > $125,000 typically take 6+ months to close.[2]

**2.**
Indecision is your #1 competitor.

56% of "no decision" deals are due to FOMU (fear of messing up).[3]

**3.**
Buyer's remorse.

60% of software buyers regret purchases in 12 to 18 months.[4]

**4.**
Unused investments.

51% of enterprise software licenses go unused.[5]

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So, how can your organization overcome time to value delays, ensure renewals and delight customers? It's time to redraw those blueprints and modernize your customer and technical enablement programs – not only to improve product adoption, but also to drive increased utilization, sales pipeline and ultimately revenue.

# Don't start from scratch.

## Start with the framework you already have in place.

A lot of time, effort and expertise has already gone into the enablement program you have. Despite what many vendors want you to think, you don't need to bring in a bulldozer. But, candidly speaking, the "status quo" isn't going to get you to the next milestone either. Put that heavy machinery in "park" and, instead, think about building upon your existing framework.

Start by evaluating your current enablement blueprints and explore how you can renovate with hands-on experiences. Here are a few elements you may already have in place. And if you are new to enablement, here are a few components to consider as you begin building your program.

## 1 Documentation, how-to guides and videos.

These common resources provide the first line of support, information and instructions on how to use your product, making them important tools for enabling and educating your customers, partners and employees. But reading guides and documentation takes time, requires ongoing effort to maintain alongside rapid software releases and can be difficult for users to remember.

A way to practice and demonstrate software skill is crucial to driving retention, proficiency, ongoing engagement and proof of skill.

## 2 Introduce features with digital adoption platforms.

Tools that provide guided tours and walkthroughs of key features and workflows are commonly found in today's software. Digital adoption platforms can help introduce customers to your product's interface and functionality. They are a useful way to build awareness but aren't enough on their own to drive utilization. That's because these feature tours lack the ability to let users safely practice what they're learning in real time and build proficiency. It's like watching a video walkthrough of a house versus walking through the house yourself and testing the faucets, flipping on the lights and peeking in the refrigerator (you know you want to).

### Pearson VUE

**Bryan Ochs**
Director of Product Management, Pearson VUE

"Reading something or watching a video only gets you so far. You have to be able to implement a hands-on component.

So, if you provide content to someone with no hands-on capability – especially in complicated technology subjects like cybersecurity or cloud or AI – it's kind of meaningless because you don't have any context for that knowledge."

See how Pearson VUE complements content with hands-on learning experiences to help certification candidates overcome the challenges of exam prep.

[Read the case study.](#)

# 3

## Empower your customer-facing teams.

With time and resources at a premium, tech companies need to find ways to help customer-facing roles shepherd more customers throughout the buying journey – from prospects to signed contracts to engaged users.

**Do your technical sellers, tech support staff and customer success teams have what they need to quickly engage and advance customers?**

All too often we hear about time-strapped support teams providing one-off training for individual clients because the existing documentation and guides are too generic to drive proficiency. In an attempt to quickly help customers, your teams end up making DIY demo videos, preparing decks, grabbing screenshots… only to find out that engineering has updated something in production and now their materials are out of date. This creates inefficiencies for both your teams and customers, hindering progressing accounts from newly activated to fully matured.

Businesses need to educate their teams, customers and partners in a scalable way that doesn't require massive updates each time there is a product update (which, let's face it, is all the time).

**How can your organization shift from reactive support to proactive success strategies?**

# 4

## Renovate your program with modern, hands-on experiences and virtual labs.

High-caliber documentation, content and customer-facing teams are important. But without a hands-on component, you're missing out on a core element in the science of learning and retention. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, 70% of new knowledge will be forgotten within 24 hours if it is not applied.



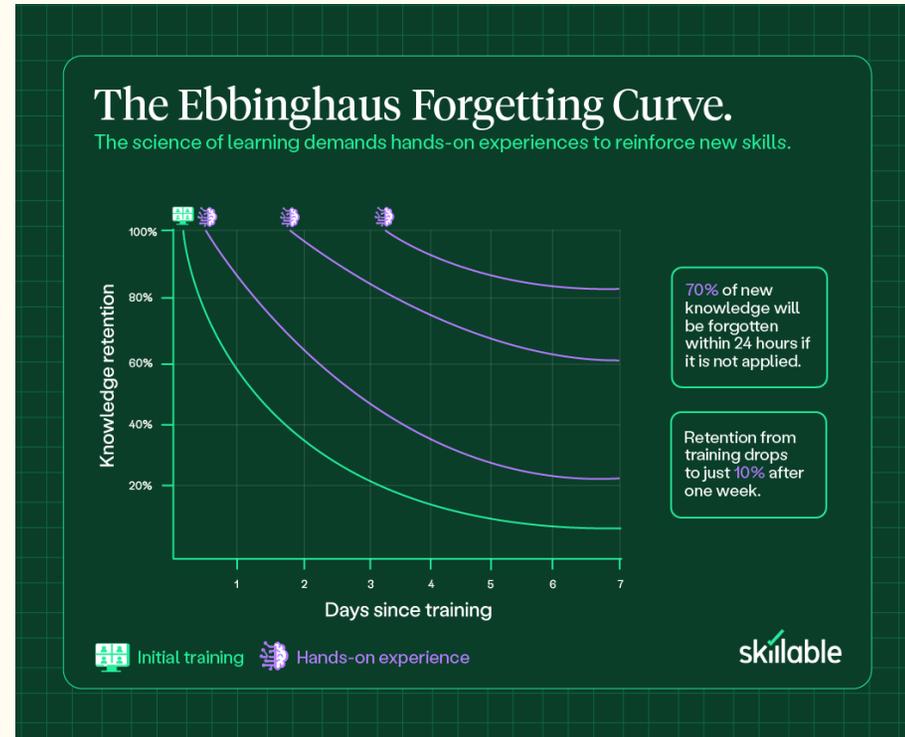The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve.
The science of learning demands hands-on experiences to reinforce new skills.

70% of new knowledge will be forgotten within 24 hours if it is not applied.

Retention from training drops to just 10% after one week.

Initial training      Hands-on experience

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Next, let's dive into the spectrum of hands-on learning environments from sandboxes to virtual labs to high-stakes performance testing.

# Hands-on environments accelerate time to value.

## The blueprints for better enablement are evolving fast – making agility and a keen user-focus paramount.

Hands-on learning is a critical element that is often missing or underutilized in customer and technical enablement programs. This might have you thinking, "Great, one more thing to manage and maintain!" But you can actually scale customer and technical enablement faster with hands-on learning and virtual labs. The key is finding the right-sized hands-on experience for your unique audiences and use cases.

Let's look at the types of hands-on environments and how they can help you renovate enablement programs.

### Sandbox environments – explore what's possible.

Create a foundation that gives users an opportunity to interact with real software in a risk-free environment without guidance.

- Some solutions require ongoing maintenance and updates. With Skillable, you can rapidly scale sandboxes using environments that stay up to date with your evolving technology.
- Ideal for previewing features, high-level overviews and exploring functionality.

### Guided learning labs – learn and practice skills.

Build onto a sandbox environment with guided learning paths that can include embedded step-by-step instructions, helpful support and hints to help users build new skills.

- Safe, low-maintenance learning and practice environment.
- Save on lab delivery costs with Skillable's reliable lab hosting capabilities.
- Ideal for demos, in-person events, customer training and enablement.

### Modern software labs – validate skills.

Level up guided learning labs to outcome-oriented labs with integrated skill validation, scoring and/or performance testing.

- Safe practice and test taking in Live-in-Software environments that can mirror production.
- Automated scoring scales how you uncover data-driven insights to fuel decision making and feed your existing platforms (e.g., LMS or LXP).
- Ideal for high-stakes certification exams, IT software training, technical sales and support training.



The levels of hands-on learning from the ground up.
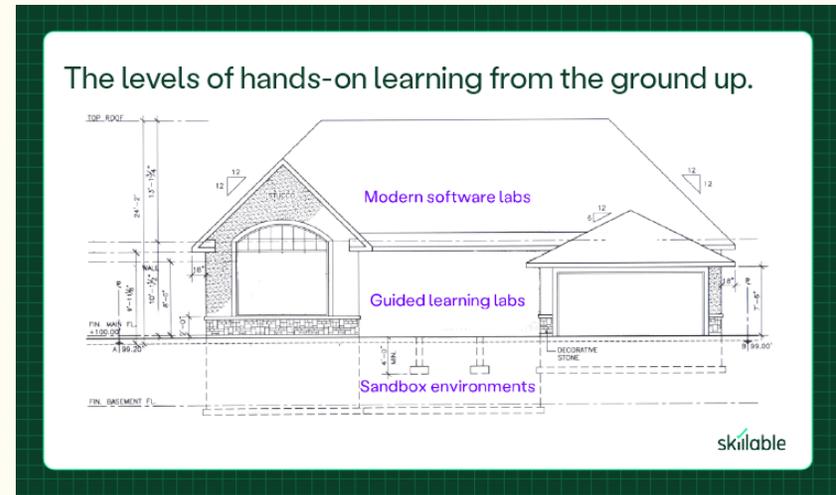
Next, take a tour of an enablement program room by room and explore the tangible business outcomes you can achieve with hands-on learning in each space.

### What about simulations?

Training simulations provide a high-level, heavily guided interactive learning experience. Unlike virtual software labs that use real software environments, simulations use images or videos of the software along with instructions. These experiences provide specific guardrails instead of giving users access to the full functionality, which can be a good option for a less technical audience.

Learn more about the differences between simulations and labs.
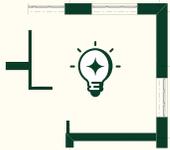
# Use cases.

## Renovate your enablement program with hands-on learning – one room at a time.

Hands-on virtual labs can improve any room in your customer and technical enablement house. Where you choose to start depends on your organization's goals and KPIs. Here are five key use cases to get started.

### Customer enablement.

When it comes to helping customers thrive with your software, start by thinking about your onboarding programs. Once customers are adopting your software, how can they rapidly realize material value and how can you foster and reinforce their new behaviors with your product? (Spoiler alert: By using it!)

Hands-on learning creates interactive experiences that show the benefits of your software, reinforce what customers learn and help them apply it in their own context. Only 11% of users engage with a feature after first exposure, making it critical to create action-driven, repeatable experiences for users to engage, gain confidence and ultimately deliver value to themselves and their organization.

Experience-based labs offer flexibility to be used throughout the customer enablement journey, including Live-in-Application implementation training, new feature exploration and scenario-based practice environments. With training labs, you can tailor experiences based on job roles and help users build confidence. The more value customers gain from using and understanding your platform, the faster you'll move them from adoption to utilization – leading to renewals and increased product affinity.

**Ready to renovate?** Download the customer enablement blueprint to get started.

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**TANIUM.**

### Measuring success with product affinity.

See how Tanium is increasing product affinity by incorporating hands-on lab experiences into their multifaceted training program that spans across employee education and technical enablement for customers and partners.
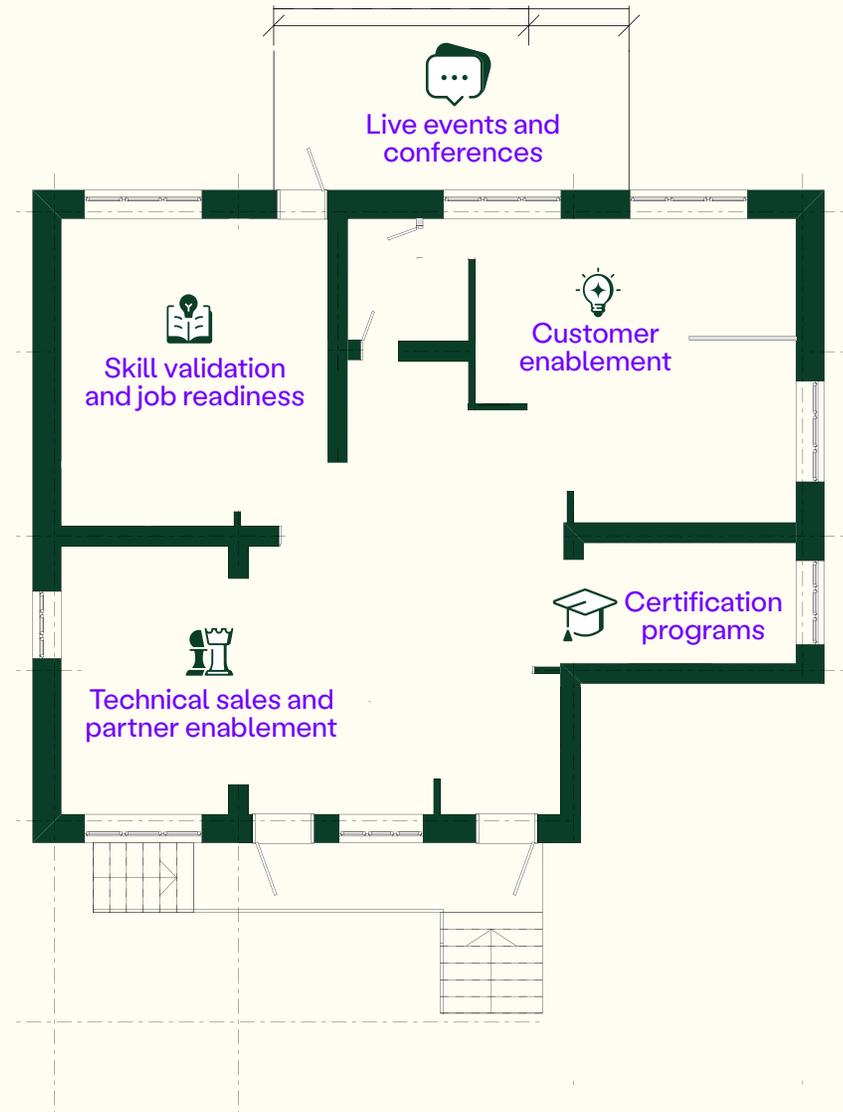
Read the success story.

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Live events and conferences

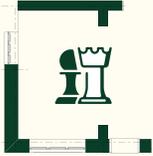Customer enablement

Skill validation and job readiness

Certification programs

Technical sales and partner enablement

## Technical sales and partner enablement.
Before you can have effective customer enablement, you need robust technical sales and partner enablement. Renovate this room with experiences that support their activities to accelerate sales cycles, increase adoption and bolster product acumen.

### Sales enablement
With scalable, quick-to-spin-up product environments, your technical sellers and partners can provide immersive sales demos and tailored proof of concepts (POCs) that showcase the personalized value of your product to prospects and customers. Beyond demos, custom labs tailored to your software and job function allow sellers to build and validate skills with performance-based evidence which equips them to have high-impact sales conversations.

### Partner enablement
Hands-on learning can also empower partners with in-depth expertise they need to effectively sell, implement and support your product. Downstream benefits include expanded revenue growth and reduced implementation issues that result in additional support costs and potential damage to brand reputation.

Staying top of mind with your partners is also paramount. If your partners offer solutions from multiple vendors, the confidence, understanding and clarity gained from being hands-on with your product can be the differentiator between you and a competitor. Bottom line: Make it easy for them to sell your products.

**Ready to remodel?** Download the technical sales and partner enablement blueprint to get started.

## Skill validation and job readiness.
In the world of complex enterprise software, ensuring users have the skills to get the most out of your platform or technology and execute their jobs correctly is critical – especially for high-stakes IT and cybersecurity roles. But the reality is companies and individuals are battling the growing Job Readiness Gap. Only one in four companies say they are satisfied with their employees' ability to use technology properly and 40% of IT professionals say their training hasn't translated into on-the-job performance.

Traditional training programs aren't cutting it. In a Skillable survey of IT professionals, 52% think their current learning ecosystem is only "somewhat effective." And while valuable, Instructor-led training alone isn't scalable. Renovate your traditional training ecosystem with scenario-based, hands-on experiences that prepare people to be job ready. Hands-on labs are a scalable way to enhance Instructor-led and on-demand training experiences with contextualized learning paths, real-time feedback, automated scoring and skill validation.

**Ready to ditch the "live laugh love" sign and modernize your training program?** Download the job readiness blueprint to get started.

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**majesco**

### See accelerated job readiness in action.
Unprecedented growth, numerous acquisitions and the pivot to remote work gave Majesco the opportunity to reevaluate their traditional Instructor-led and sandbox-based training program.

Learn how Majesco's new experiential learning approach saved them $300K annually and accelerated job readiness.

Read the success story.

## Certification programs.

Each certification your organization awards is a signal you've validated a candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities – that's a lot of responsibility – and you take it seriously. For certification programs tied to business objectives, hands-on learning can help:

1. **Improve credibility** – Use hands-on labs to make certification programs more realistic, relevant and rigorous.
2. **Counter cheating and exam dumps** – Hands-on labs require test takers to demonstrate skill, which can't be done with a downloaded answer key.
3. **Bridge the gap between knowledge and skill** – If people are passing your certifications, but they can't apply what they've learned on the job, you need to add a high-fidelity, hands-on component.

For the exam itself, you can create high-stakes environments for Live-in-Application exam sections that go beyond multiple-choice questions and require certification candidates to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in realistic scenarios. For certification preparation, practice labs can improve the candidate experience, accelerate exam readiness and improve pass rates by providing:

• Safe practice environments with automated real-time feedback.
• Labs in on-demand and Instructor-led training courses.
• Performance Testing (PBT) to validate skills.

Content is important, but hands-on experiences transform theoretical knowledge into tangible validated skills. The result is more confident certification candidates who are better prepared not only to pass the exam, but also tackle the real-world job responsibilities (and start pursuing their next certification).

**Ready to transform your program?** Download the certification program blueprint to get started.
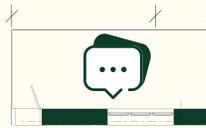
## Live events and conferences.

Live events and user conferences are a huge opportunity to showcase your software's latest features, updates and innovations to a captivated audience. And they're extremely valuable – 70% of attendees say that in-person events are the best sources for training and professional content. But how can you maximize engagement, further measure event return on investment, create new sales opportunities and accelerate existing deals?

Today's conference goers demand more than big-name keynote sessions and networking opportunities – they want to get hands-on with your products. By strategically integrating hands-on sessions into your event, you create a user-first experience that drives attendance, engagement and ultimately customer loyalty. Here are the most popular use cases we see:

• **General and breakout sessions**, where you use live demos to show attendees how your software works and what it can do for them.
• **Hands-on workshops and labs**, where attendees use your software in a guided or self-paced format. These experiences can capitalize on the buzz you generate when showcasing your product in a keynote.
• **Beta testing and feedback sessions** to entice early adopters, drive user engagement and generate helpful feedback for your engineers and product teams.
• **In-person certification testing**, where you can offer attendees the chance to take your certification exam on-site.

**Add KPIs related to the hands-on learning experiences you delivered to measure the impact of events.** Examples include new sales opportunities, the number of customer support tickets, certification pass rates and adoption of a new feature. Note: It may take months or multiple events to see measurable results and trends – make sure to set expectations and be patient!

**Want to make more outcome-oriented and measurable events?** Download the live events and conferences blueprint to get started.

# How to start renovating with hands-on experiences.

**Sticking to the status quo isn't going to crush your revenue goals or create customers who can't live without your solution.** But you don't have to start over, and you don't have to do it alone. Here are some parting thoughts on starting your enablement renovation.

## Start small (and build the house everyone wants to move into).

While you may be eager to align training and enablement across your organization, don't try to do it all at once. Much like renovating a house – in a perfect world, you would temporarily move out and have all the work done right away. But here in reality, that's not feasible. Your business doesn't stop, and you need to live in it while the work is being done!

Pick one use case, optimize for specific KPIs and build the proof of concept. (Once other departments see what you're doing, they'll be banging on your door wanting in – we know, we see it all the time.)

**Download a use case blueprint below to get started.**

- • [Customer enablement](#)
- • [Technical sales and partner enablement](#)
- • [Skill validation and job readiness](#)
- • [Certification programs](#)
- • [Live events and conferences](#)

## Find a trusted partner with a proven track record.

There is a time and a place for DIY, but don't let it get in the way of speed and expertise. If you don't have the skills or bandwidth on your team or think it's time for your homegrown lab ecosystem to move out, Skillable's hosted environments and Professional Services team can partner with your subject matter experts to deliver the right-sized hands-on lab experience for your unique business needs.

## Measure success.

Define what success looks like before you begin your renovation project. Use this goal as your guide to keep your project focused on measurable outcomes you can use to gain stakeholder buy-in on your next round of renovations.

## Build enablement programs that deliver results.

Skillable's hands-on environments put your product in the hands of users to create job-ready sellers, qualified partners and customers who can't live without your product.

1. [Forrester](#)
2. [B2B Sales Data](#)
3. [Understanding Customer Indecision](#)
4. [Why Software Buyers Experience Regret](#)
5. [2024 SaaS Management Index](#)

**Leading companies rely on Skillable to support their hands-on learning initiatives.**

## [See why](#).

Microsoft

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Quest

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TANIUM

# Learn more at **skillable.com**.