



Administrate

Why Spreadsheets Aren't Enough to Manage Your Training

**Understanding the Limitations of Spreadsheets
and How They Impact the Scalability of Your
Training Program**

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Introduction

Spreadsheets are a great tool for organizing course and instructor schedules, maintaining course descriptions, and as a repository for learner data...to begin with.

As your organization grows and your training team scales alongside it, they become more of a hindrance than an aid to the agility of your team. Instead of having the flexibility to strategize for the future and build innovative learning programs that [catalyze the growth and agility of your organization](#), your training team is stuck updating cells in a spreadsheet.

Your schedules get muddled between instructors and courses, course descriptions get mixed up in all the tabs on your laptop, and learner data gets lost amongst all the rows, columns, and sheets.

Basically, scalability is impossible when you rely on spreadsheets. And, that's because priorities for modern organizations are always shifting and fluid: there are too many variables that can't be maintained in rows and columns.

Spreadsheets Were an Innovation (in 1979)

Spreadsheets may be one of the most significant advances in computing. When [VisiCalc](#) was first released in 1979, it was so desirable that it became the first “[Killer Application](#)”. In other words, it was so important it single-handedly drove the purchase of the platform on which it ran (in this case the Apple II).

VisiCalc, and better-known successors like Microsoft Excel and Lotus 1-2-3, almost immediately became bedrock components of the personal computing revolution. The possibilities that spreadsheets opened up for businesses small and large alike was nothing short of transformational.

Now, with tech advances like CRMs, databases, and cloud-based platforms, there is no reason to be overly reliant on spreadsheets. They were innovative 40+ years ago, but relying on them to be anything more than a repository of data, or as an aid to strategy development, can hold your training program back and make it hard to scale your impact on the business.

Spreadsheets Still Add Value, To a Point

Many learning and development teams start out running their entire training operation using a collection of spreadsheets and calendaring programs. Spreadsheets are great because they're flexible, easy to use, easy to get started with, and almost every computer has the ability to create or view a Microsoft Excel document. Plus, online tools like Google Sheets are always available.

Furthermore, many training programs start lean and mean, and work within the constraints of the resources available to them. Spreadsheets just so happen to be readily available, and free online. Plus, there are a wealth of templates available that help your training team establish a foundation for managing training.

Unfortunately, as the need for more training initiatives arises, and your organization depends more on your training team to impact the bottom-line business objectives, the amount of spreadsheets and pivot tables start to build. Soon, your team is left to navigate a maze that's disconnected from the goals you're trying to achieve, and scaling becomes more and more difficult.



What Happens When Training Teams Start Trying to Scale with Spreadsheets?

The reality is, most learning and development programs [will start scaling alongside the businesses they serve with spreadsheets](#), event management systems, and calendaring software—not to mention a host of other disconnected systems—because in most organizations the training function is expected to operate on a tight budget.

This results in a desire to find cheap solutions to manage the administrative work required to operate a learning and development team, which in turn creates a need to integrate these systems together. Guess where that integration occurs? In spreadsheets. Sound familiar?

System integration via Excel or Google Sheets is problematic because it's error prone and time-consuming. The more systems your team implements in order to tackle the need to scale the quantity and quality of your training, the more likely it is that you're relying on spreadsheets to do a job they just weren't designed to do.

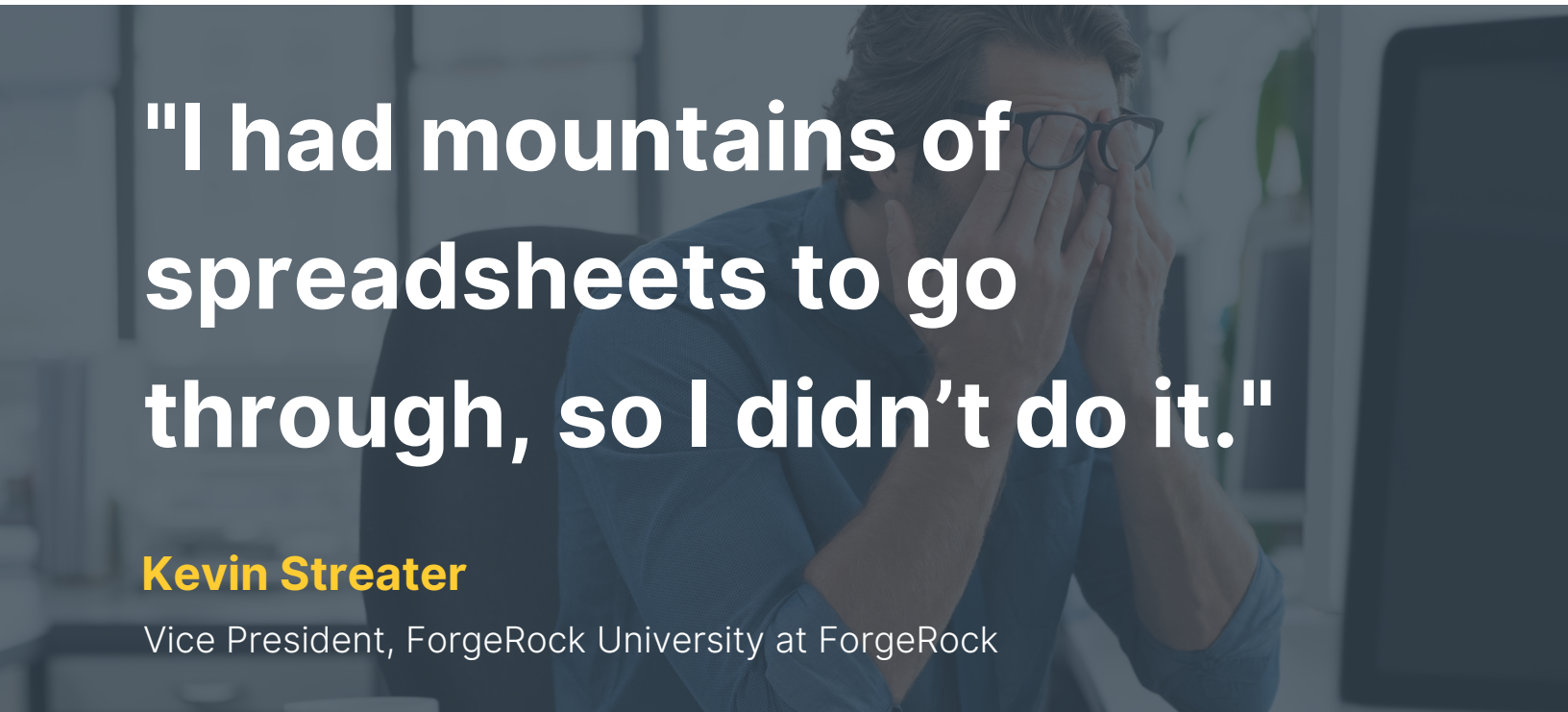
Once a certain volume of training is reached, the drawbacks of spreadsheets begin to appear.



Your Data Grows in Quantity and Complexity Over Time

Chances are that you start off with one or two small spreadsheets. They're manageable, to begin with, but then they grow in complexity and the amount of spreadsheets needed to run your training program becomes overwhelming. We've seen training operations have separate spreadsheets for course templates, courses they're running, bookings, learner rosters, cross-departmental charging, instructor schedules, and it goes on and on with every department, employee, or context requiring its own document.

[Synchronizing these various sheets is a daunting, near impossible, task.](#)



"I had mountains of spreadsheets to go through, so I didn't do it."

Kevin Streater

Vice President, ForgeRock University at ForgeRock

As your organization begins to seek more actionable training that can assist in higher customer satisfaction ratings, less ticket mistakes, increased partner competency, and employee retention, to name a few objectives that crop up as organizations grow, data becomes paramount. Being able to capture data that helps your team tell the story of how training is impacting the bottom line of the organization is difficult when you have to sift through multiple spreadsheets in order to compile all the data and connect it to an objective.

Permissions, Versioning, and Data Retention are All Difficult

Spreadsheets are built to analyze and visualize data. They're not good at preventing some users from seeing sensitive data, providing an audit trail for changes, or retaining historical data for future review.

Not Built for Collaboration

What if you have to access your information on the go? What if you and a colleague both update an event's information and then save the file in sequence? Spreadsheets aren't built for modern collaboration methods. Sharing documents via shared drive, email, or Dropbox can be suitable for specific projects or temporary needs, but running a business or department using this type of collaboration can be error-prone and cause intense frustration.

Spreadsheets Often Contain Errors

Excel and Google Sheets are used in many different facets and to serve a multitude of business functions, from budget planning to visualizing data. And, when there is a mistake in the spreadsheet, it can cause significant damage.

Not only do spreadsheets themselves contain errors, but when copying and pasting course information, templated learner communications, or learner data from a spreadsheet to your LMS, your email client, or your HRIS it's easy to make mistakes.

Automations Aren't Supported

[Automations like reminders, action items, task assignments, learner communications](#), and more are impossible in spreadsheets. While Google Sheets allow you to notify people of action items and assign tasks to them, they don't automatically create task lists or workflows. This can really impact your efficiency and make it hard to hold teammates and vendors accountable for their tasks.

Workflows Are Manual and They're Hard to Define and Enforce

Spreadsheets are great for storing information, but they're not built to handle processes or workflows. Many of the challenges inherent in delivering training require adherence to a detailed process. For example, making sure your course resources, like documentation, vendors, instructors, and classroom needs are all lined up for a session you're running is difficult without a system to manage everything from a single source.

Trying to manage your training resources from multiple spreadsheets, with multiple users, is nearly impossible when you're running an enterprise training operation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly...

Spreadsheets Track Your Program But Never Drive Business Decisions

You'll need other applications to send joining instructions, view courses on a calendar, track attendance, record scores, provide reminders, print or email certificates, and provide eLearning. Spreadsheets just can't cope with all these different requirements.

Furthermore, an Excel file or Google Sheets file is not going to help you summarize data without spending painstaking time to do so. So, reflecting on what your data means, and how it can [inform business decisions](#) becomes an exercise in great patience. When you're trying to demonstrate the effectiveness of your training, not only can this be frustrating, but it can mean the difference between receiving the support you need to make a difference, and having the scalability of your training program being put on the back burner.



The Training Software Revolution

There is no doubt that spreadsheets are a valuable tool. They have their place within any business. However, significant advancements in industry-specific software over the last thirty years have resulted in the availability of refined [training management platforms](#), built specifically for training programs.

Training management platforms were specifically designed to approach the operational and administrative work associated with training programs holistically. Organize everything you need to run your training operations in one place in the cloud, and integrate with your other critical EdTech software to dramatically reduce your team's reliance on spreadsheets.

Training Management: The New Innovation

An emerging class of EdTech software is now taking training operations to another level. Enterprises realized that the complexities of today's training teams require a technology infrastructure to bring together information, contributors, learners, tasks, budgets, and more -- all in a single platform.

Administrate has helped hundreds of companies deliver training to thousands of learners all around the world.

With Administrate, you can:



Organize your training courses, documents, and content. Match learning paths to organizational goals. Use a built-in CRM to coordinate learning engagement.



Deliver online, instructor-led, virtual instructor-led and blended learning seamlessly, across digital devices.



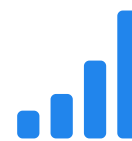
Plan your human and training resources wisely. Coordinate scheduling and logistics, tracking and reporting on financials as you go.



Automate reminders and schedules. Leverage built-in integrations with common systems, or customize via our API.

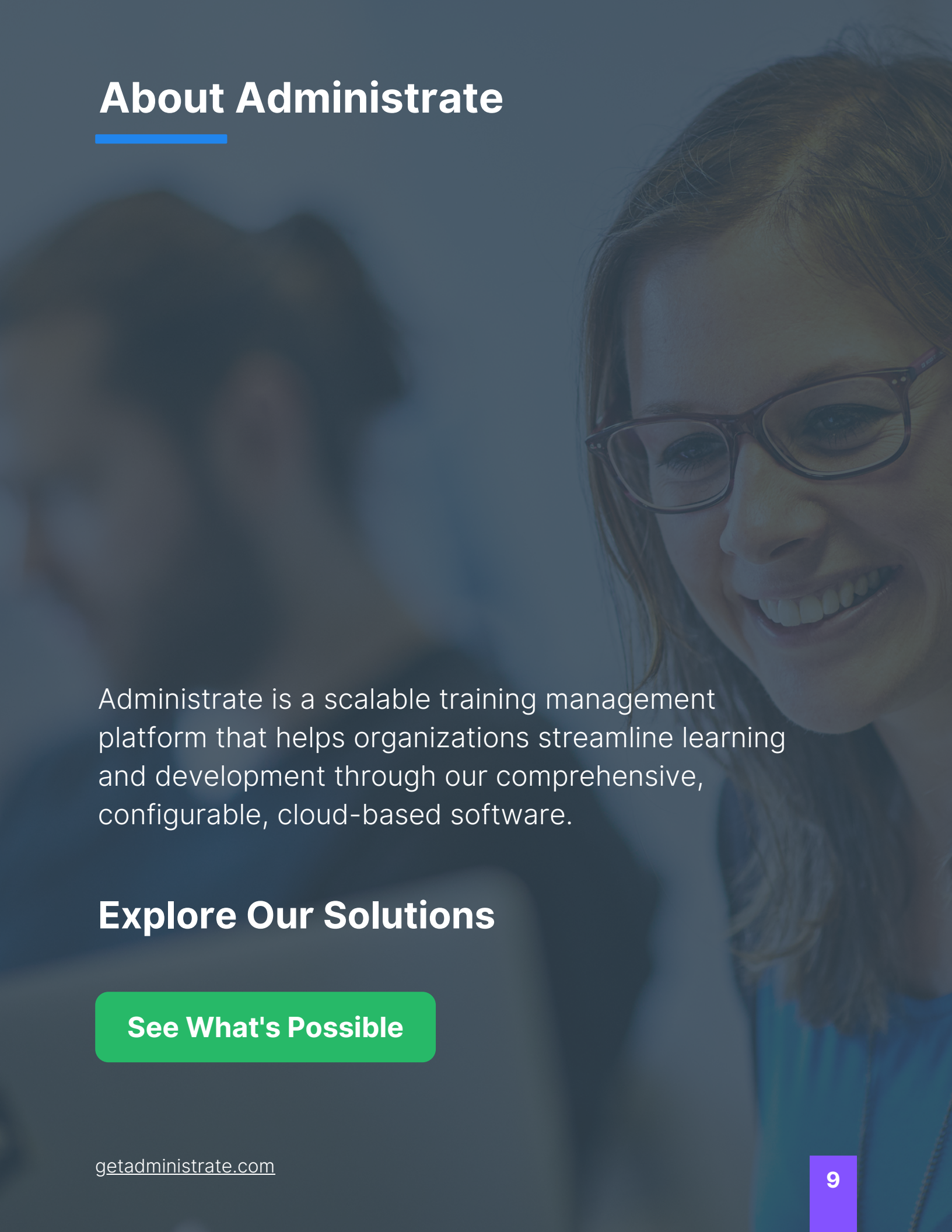


Analyze your ROI with accessible, accurate data and reports



Scale your growth with a system agile enough to keep pace with business changes.

About Administrate

A background image of a smiling woman with glasses, partially obscured by a dark blue overlay. The woman has blonde hair and is wearing a blue top. The overlay covers the left and center of the image, leaving the right side showing the woman's face.

Administrate is a scalable training management platform that helps organizations streamline learning and development through our comprehensive, configurable, cloud-based software.

Explore Our Solutions

See What's Possible

We're a Partner, Not Just a Vendor

Unlike other training software providers, we're not going to leave you to figure it out after you sign on.

Our expert teams dedicated to implementation, development, and professional services have substantial background in the training industry. They are standing by to help your organization achieve meaningful alignment and achieve real business results. That's part of the Administrate experience.

We've already helped hundreds of organizations serving millions of learners. We're ready to help you.

**Schedule a consult with an
Administrate expert today.**

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Email info@getadministrate.com

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