RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECTIVE ONLINE LEARNING [E LEARNING] METHODOLOGY FOR CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

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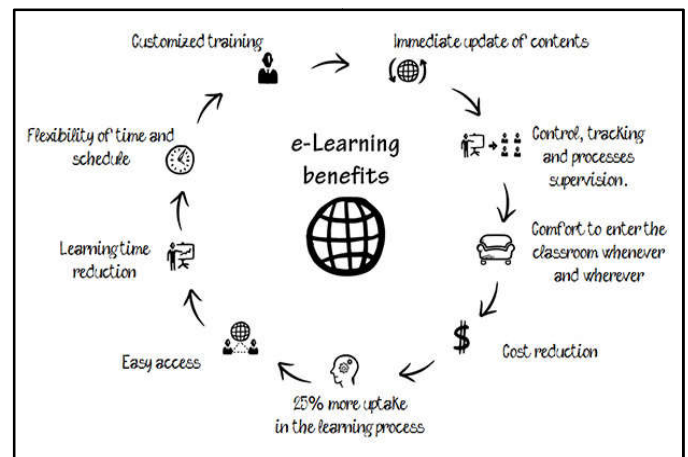| ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In the present scenario, training is becoming one of the most important human resource & organizational development function for many corporate industries. Many training programs are formulated for 1 day & even goes up to 3-6 days. In the fast corporate world, employees find it difficult to manage to attend the training program. In order to resolve the issue, there are lot of popular online tools available for the professionals who can sit at their place where ever they are & attend the session. This is also called as virtual learning.

INTRODUCTION

Benefits of E Learning

There are loads of benefits conducting the virtual training programs for corporate sectors. Online learning, or e-learning, offers a number of advantages for people and companies looking to develop a new content program or curricula — none bigger than the ability to offer that training anywhere, anytime. That means whether the trainees are all together in a classroom or scattered all over the country in different time zones, they can still tap into the same course materials, and at a time that's convenient to them. The Benefits of Online Learning

But those are just some of the benefits of online learning. Here are some others:

Simple, Flexible Logistics: After location, time is the greatest limitation on learning. That goes for both the instructors and the attendees, each of who has to be both available and in alignment with the other for face-to-face instruction. By removing that requirement, everyone involved can participate at a time, and for a duration, that suits his or her schedules.

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Immediate Results and Feedback: Anyone who has graded papers knows it can get tedious, and it's time-consuming. Many of the most popular standardized tests, in fact, still rely on evaluation techniques that slow results. Most online learning technologies integrate online quizzes and other tools to more rapidly evaluate the pace of learning.

Better Retention: With clever design, user experience, and multimedia, online instruction can prove to be a richer and more effective learning experience than traditional methods and channels.

Greater Access to Expertise: In any country, there are only a handful of cities that can claim among their residents the experts in every field of study. Take away the limitations of geography, and expertise is free to travel almost anywhere. This transformation allows information on highly specialized subjects to reach more people, paving the way for advances in fields from telemedicine to non-profit charities.

A Better Fit for 21st-Century Businesses: As companies become more globally focused, co-workers are more likely to work in different places, if not on different continents. Online learning can help prepare employees to excel in today's scattered, virtual office. For those already working up the career ladder, online learning makes use of resources and technologies already at their fingertips. Online learning is a still a relatively young industry, promising a rich future of breakthroughs. New models of teaching are already emerging that have the potential to take online learning to even greater accomplishments.

Benefits for Trainer/Facilitator for E Learning Mechanism

- The amount of energy involved in the regular classroom session will not be there in the virtual training sessions as they may have to talk in a minimal voice. If it is in the classroom session, the energy level should be very high, the voice should be audible for all the participants and getting restless would be inevitable. If the training is conducted via online, all the above mentioned factors can be avoided.
- It will be a very interesting atmosphere for the trainers to conduct sessions. This will give a different exposure to the facilitators & they will start enjoying the sessions even more
- Usage of visual aids will help the facilitators more. They can show slides & also videos by sharing the link. Online tests can be effectively conducted.
- Individual concentration can be easily given as the number of participants will not be high like we have in the classroom sessions. Thus session can be effectively conducted & the delivery will be very successful.
- Well-organized & well-structured sessions can be undertaken. Thus the objective of the session will be met very easily. Work load will be reduced. Everything can be done online. First time it may be time consuming. But once if everything is set, it is the most easiest & most convenient for the trainers to handle the session.
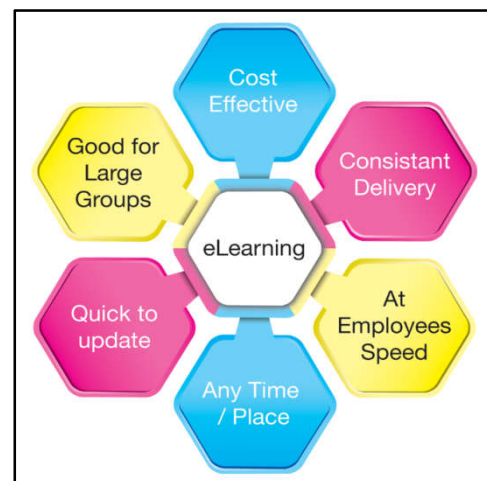
Benefits for Attendees for E Learning Mechanism

- Participants can access the training module at any point of time. They just need to enter the user name & password to login.
- Making notes will be even easier. They can pause the session or record the session & save it in their system/laptop/mobile
- The sessions can be played many number of times till the participant is comfortable with the module.
- If the internet is good & fast, the Learning Management System will do wonders by making the session fast & convenient.

- The self-assessment can be done very effectively & can get the results immediately after they finish the online questionnaire.
- Time invested in travelling will be reduced. The learning will be incorporated very easily as they can choose the time for the session. There will not be any stress, no unnecessary phone calls etc.., Thus the learning curve will be more successful.

Benefits for organization with e learning mechanism

- The cost will be saved on
  o Employee training attending cost
  o Hospitality Cost
  o Higher Trainer Cost
  o At times Commutation Cost
  o Boarding & Lodging Cost
- The work will not be stopped as the module can be accessed at anytime.
- Learning implementation can be identified easily through regular follow-ups
- They can create their own customized Learning Management Systems & Online Libraries.
- The teaching material can be updated then & there. Thus it is very flexible.

The four levels of e learning evaluation – Theory by don kirkpatrick

Level One – Reaction

As the word implies, evaluation at this level measures how the learners react to the training. This level is often measured with attitude questionnaires that are passed out after most training classes. This level measures one thing: the learner's perception (reaction) of the course. Learners are keenly aware of what they need to know to accomplish a task. If the training program fails to satisfy their needs, a determination should be made as to whether it's the fault of the program design or delivery. This level is not indicative of the training's performance potential as it does not measure what new skills the learners have acquired or what they have learned that will transfer back to the working environment. This has caused some evaluators to down play its value. However, the interest, attention and

motivation of the participants are critical to the success of any training program. People learn better when they react positively to the learning environment. When a learning package is first presented, rather it be e-learning, classroom training, CBT, etc., the learner has to make a decision as to whether he or she will pay attention to it. However, if the task is presented as low-relevance or there is a low probability of success, then a negative effect is generated and motivation for task engagement is low. This differs somewhat from Kirkpatrick. He writes, *"Reaction may best be considered as how well the trainees liked a particular training program"*. However, the less relevance the learning package is to a learner, then the more effort that has to be put into the design and presentation of the learning package. That is, if it is not relevant to the learner, then the learning package has to "hook" the learner through slick design, humor, games, etc. This is not to say that design, humor, or games are not important. However, their use in a learning package should be to promote the "learning process," not to promote the "learning package" itself. And if a learning package is built of sound design, then it should be help the learners to fix a performance gap. Hence, they should be motivated to learn!

Level Two – Learning

This is the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, and increase skill as a result of attending the program. It addresses the question: *Did the participants learn anything?* The learning evaluation requires post-testing to ascertain what skills were learned during the training. In addition, the post-testing is only valid when combined with pre-testing, so that you can differentiate between what they already knew prior to training and what they actually learned during the training program. Measuring the learning that takes place in a training program is important in order to validate the learning objectives. Evaluating the learning that has taken place typically focuses on such questions as:

* What knowledge was acquired?
* What skills were developed or enhanced?
* What attitudes were changed?

Learner assessments are created to allow a judgment to be made about the learner's capability for performance. There are two parts to this process: the gathering of information or evidence (testing the learner) and the judging of the information (what does the data represent?). This assessment should not be confused with *evaluation*. Assessment is about the progress and achievements of the individual learners, while evaluation is about the learning program as a whole.

Level Three - Performance (behavior)

In Kirkpatrick's original four-levels of evaluation, he names this level "behavior." However, behavior is the action that is performed, while the final results of the behavior are the performance. Gilbert said that performance has two aspects -- behavior being the means and its consequence being the end (1998). If we were only worried about the behavioral aspect, then this could be done in the training environment. However, the consequence of the behavior (performance) is what we are really after -- can the learner now perform in the working environment? This evaluation involves testing the students capabilities to perform learned skills while on the job, rather than in the classroom. Level three evaluations can be performed formally (testing) or informally (observation). It is important to measure performance because the primary purpose of training is to improve results by having the students learn new skills and knowledge and then actually applying them to the job. Learning new skills and knowledge is no good to an organization unless the participants actually use them in their work activities. Since level three measurements must take place after the learners have returned to their jobs, the actual Level three measurements will typically involve someone closely involved with the learner, such as a supervisor. Although it takes a greater effort to collect this data than it does to collect data during training, its value is important to the training department and organization as the data provides insight into the transfer of learning from the classroom to the work environment and the barriers encountered when attempting to implement the new techniques learned in the program.

Level Four – Results

This is the final results that occur. It measures the training program's effectiveness, that is, "What impact has the training achieved?" These impacts can include such items as monetary, efficiency, moral, teamwork, etc. While it is often difficult to isolate the results of a training program, it is usually possible to link training contributions to organizational improvements. Collecting, organizing and analyzing level four information can be difficult, time-consuming and more costly than the other three levels, but the results are often quite worthwhile when viewed in the full context of its value to the organization. As we move from level one to level four, the evaluation process becomes more difficult and time-consuming; however, it provides information that is of increasingly significant value. Perhaps the most frequently type of measurement is Level one because it is the easiest to measure. However, it provides the least valuable data. Measuring results that affect the organization is considerably more difficult, thus it is conducted less frequently, yet it yields the most valuable information.

E learning tools for effective training delivery

There are few tools which helps the E Learning mechanism very easier. Some of the most used Tools are

o Learning Management System
o Learning Content Management System
o Web-Ex
o Video Conferencing
o Online Document Sharing
o Virtual Learning Environment
o Screen Recording
o Online Assessments, Quizzes

Learning management system functionality

* Course Content Delivery
* Student Registration and Administration

- Training Event Management (i.e., scheduling, tracking)
- Curriculum and Certification Management
- Skills and Competencies Management
- Skill Gap Analysis
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Assessing and resulting
- Reporting
- Training Record Management
- Courseware Authoring
- Resource Management
- Performance Management System Integration

Learning Content Management System Functionality

- Template-driven, Collaborative Content Development
- Facilitated Content Management (i.e., indexing and reuse)
- Publishing
- Workflow Integration
- Automated Interface with an LM

Webex: WebEx Communications Inc. is a company that provides on-demand collaboration, online meeting, web conferencing and videoconferencing applications. Its products include Meeting Center, Training Center, Event Center, Support Center, Sales Center, MeetMeNow, PCNow, WebEx AIM Pro Business Edition, WebEx WebOffice, and WebEx Connect. People can get connected from any part of the world. Documents, slides, presentations can also be shared here.

Visual Learning Environment

A VLE may include some or all of the following elements:

- Administrative information about the course: prerequisites, credits, registration, payments, physical sessions, and contact information for the instructor.
- A notice board for current information about the ongoing course
- The basic content of some or all of the course; the complete course for distance learning applications, or some part of it, when used as a portion of a conventional course. This normally includes material such as copies of lecture in the form of text, audio, or video presentations, and the supporting visual presentations
- Additional resources, either integrated or as links to outside resources. This typically consists of supplementary reading, or innovative equivalents for it.
- Self-assessment quizzes or analogous devices, normally scored automatically
- Formal assessment functions, such as examinations, essay submission, or presentation of projects. this now frequently includes components to support peer assessment
- Support for communications, including e-mail, threaded discussions, chat rooms, Twitter and other media, sometimes with the instructor or an assistant acting as moderator. Additional elements include wikis, blogs, RSS and 3D virtual learning spaces.
- Links to outside sources – pathways to all other online learning spaces are linked via the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment).

- Management of access rights for instructors, their assistants, course support staff, and students
- Documentation and statistics as required for institutional administration and quality control
- Authoring tools for creating the necessary documents by the instructor, and, usually, submissions by the students
- Provision for the necessary hyperlinks to create a unified presentation to the students

Video Conferencing

Here a large screen will be kept & the speaker will be speaking & the audience will be listening to it. This is done when there is a large group of audience. Components required for a videoconferencing system include:

- Video input: video camera or webcam
- Video output: computer monitor, television or projector
- Audio input: microphones, CD/DVD player, cassette player, or any other source of PreAmp audio outlet.
- Audio output: usually loudspeakers associated with the display device or telephone
- Data transfer: analog or digital telephone network, LAN or Internet
- Computer: a data processing unit that ties together the other components, does the compressing and decompressing, and initiates and maintains the data linkage via the network.

There are basically two kinds of videoconferencing systems:

1.Dedicated systems have all required components packaged into a single piece of equipment, usually a console with a high quality remote controlled video camera. These cameras can be controlled at a distance to pan left and right, tilt up and down, and zoom. There are several types of dedicated videoconferencing devices:

- Large group videoconferencing are non-portable, large, more expensive devices used for large rooms and auditoriums.
- Small group videoconferencing are non-portable or portable, smaller, less expensive devices used for small meeting rooms.
- Individual videoconferencing are usually portable devices, meant for single users, have fixed cameras, microphones and loudspeakers integrated into the console.

2.Desktop systems are add-ons (hardware boards or software codec) to normal PCs and laptops, transforming them into videoconferencing devices. A range of different cameras and microphones can be used with the codec, which contains the necessary codec and transmission interfaces. These can also be nonstandard, Microsoft Lync, Skype for Business, Google Hangouts, or Yahoo Messenger or standards based, Cisco Jabber.

Suggestions for effective e learning delivery

1. The Human Resource Team or the Training Team should get associated with some E Learning Organizations for different level of employees in the organization

2. Organization should start encouraging the Senior Management to start using the tools. Thus they can make their down the line employees also to take the initiative of E Learning
3. The review mechanism should be conducted on the regular basis whether the participants are incorporating the learning or not
4. Compulsive E Learning mechanism should be evolved. Thus employees who are intended on the self enhancement will certainly make use of this opportunity. Conventional mechanism of learning cannot be stopped. But along with that, if E Learning is also supported, it will increase the bandwidth of the organization.
5. Since the customization is possible, the modules can be made with

a.Speakers Information
b.Interesting Videos
c.Discussion Forums [sessions in WebEx, Online Streaming, Video Conferencing etc]
d.Quiz
e.Self-Assessments
f.Practice Exercises
g.Course Completion E-Certificates

These will certainly motivate the participants as it will not only enhance their skills but also the value which they will attain after these courses. Thus they will even recommend this to other colleagues.

Conclusion

E Learning is the most effective way of learning. The organization may have to invest time & resources to build their own customized Learning Management System. If this is established well, the Self Learning Mechanism from the employees' front will be on the higher end. Their performance will be enhanced, growth will be good & the retention of employees can be done very effectively. Thus the ROI [Return On Investment] from this is very high.

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