

E-Learning Strategies and Challenges in Organizations

Yuvapriya P

Lead - Education and Research Department, Infosys Limited

Abstract: Organizations are not having the precise components and operational atmosphere in place to adopt with eLearning. It's not only because of dearth of need of an organization but also organizations have been very slow to adopt eLearning. In fact eLearning offers tremendous benefits for organizations in the form of time savings, bagged expertise, improved workflow and improved employee development. The key elements such as learning culture, employee web knowledge and the good training professional presence will enable this act in the organization. In the corporate environment, the cost-cutting can often help to justify eLearning; therefore managers must take a closer look at how eLearning can solve multiple problems faced by an employee. The eLearning solutions and strategies entails an employee in understanding the new technologies that come out with wikis, web conferencing, sharing screens, and content management systems. Thus makes organizations to seek eLearning for knowledge-based content, especially if the content will remain consistent over time or if the training must be reproduced often or occasionally. And also organization can look for multipurpose tools to help the struggling employee to promote multiple goals, training new employees, and capturing expertise by improved communication. Moreover organization faces more economic and social pressures to find new ways of training delivery and encounter fewer administrative, financial, and technical barriers to implement eLearning than other segments of the education industry. However business success depends more and more on high-quality employee performance, which in turn requires high-quality training. Corporate executives are beginning to understand that enhancing employee skills is key to creating a sustainable competitive advantage. Hence organizations can improve an efficiency and effectiveness on a continued basis with eLearning support by integrating eLearning with organization's strategic plan, knowledge management system, and education partnerships.

1. Challenges faced by Organizations to implement eLearning

In an Organizations every meadow are utilizing eLearning through some of the latest technology. It is actually helping the organization to fine-tune fabrication, improves sales and increases the volume of their employees. By the way they are gaining an economical advantage that in turn encourages organization to advance further in eLearning. The need for this paper immediately stops the organization from the lack of academic analysis of eLearning in organizations.

The fact is that the organization eLearning market is very much dense to access and also they are dispersed geographically around the globe. Organizations business may lack when it does not tend to provide fund to invest in distance eLearning programs. However developing unique eLearning solutions for their distinct need requires lot of money and time. But there are number of possibilities for organizations to take advantage of eLearning and increase their own effectiveness and efficiency. This will not expect to be done by an external vendor or contractor; instead the design and implementation of eLearning must come from inside organization. Then it will tune the organization to sustain over a period of time and it can be simulated for future success. This paper focuses on starting small and integrating eLearning into the fabric of organizations from the inside organization.

2. Significance of an Organization

The organization can be defined by the number of employees, the amount of fabrication and/or the yearly revenue. Appropriate description is significant because it can qualify the organization business. This paper focuses on the organizations which withstands in business for a number of years and growing slowly year by year by increasing production and annual revenue.

Approximately 93% of businesses tend to have owners or managers who like to get their hands dirty working alongside the staff (SOLT, 2004). Habitually employees must play variety of roles depending on the needs of an organization. And also Job descriptions are sometimes not clear and identifying training needs can be a challenge for an organization. An organization supports myriad charities, nonprofits, and profit businesses. These can either be federal in one place or they can be dispersed all over the world. Like businesses organization may also wish to sell their products to people around the world. Hence these organizations outreach and groups served can often be on a national/international scale.

3. An organization implementseLearning

The organization's front-runners must be able to answer few questions before they try to identify how to integrate eLearning into the fabric of an organization. Firstly why eLearning makes sense; obvious answer would be improving performance of an employee, but the scrutiny should go beyond for leaders. However eLearning poses plenty lot of benefits for organizations, in such a way it helps an organization to automate and restructure processes and training. The obstruction is on the dynamism and money needed to design and create eLearning for such a huge number of employees. In the challenging environment and with the technological improvement eLearning is feasibly attracting suitable people including managers in order to address challenges faced in the organizations.

And secondly which competencies should improve by an employee to enable the success of an organization; what knowledge is required; and what resources are accessible through the Internet; Answering these types of questions can often be challenging for the typical organization, but the decision to use eLearning and the method through which it will be delivered must be well-analyzed. "Technologies should only be bought when they are proven to be useful, not simply because they are available" (Berge, 2001, p.123). Most organizations only need training in small pieces to satisfy immediate needs as problems arise (DG Education & Culture European Commission, 2005)—just enough, just-in-time.

4. Major Challenges Addressed by Organizations

Organizations face a number of challenges that can make the organization difficult to adopt with eLearning. Research has shown that there are four main reasons for their lack of eLearning: managers are too busy, unaware or disinterested in eLearning; there is a lack of appropriate infrastructure; they cannot justify the need; and/or they cannot identify their training needs (McCullough, 2005; Reich & Schumermann, 2003).

4.1 Key Challenges faced by Managers in Organization's

Managers and their teams are usually so busy working on a variety of projects and trying to tie up with the daily workload, similarly training and preparation for future improvement is not an option for them. Hence there is a complete lack of training/learning in the organization. This is certainly the case with many of the organization where they are more concerned with surviving year after year than preparing their employees for future growth. However many organizations often have an entire department that focuses on in-house training. Training employees is the responsibility of a program manager who is often juggling many tasks and expects new employees to play active roles in the organization after a quick orientation and a short probationary period. Research has shown that most small organizations are "crisis-driven." They are so consumed with putting out fires and trying to take advantage of opportunities when they are recognized, that they never actually are able to make a plan to strategically improve the human performance within the organization (PJB Associates, 2001; Reich & Schumermann, 2003).

Many organizations still exist with informal training, experiential learning, and peer groups (SOLT, 2004) rather than formal training programs. Because of close proximities among employees and the hands-on role manager's play in day-to-day activities, it is easiest to coach new employees when the need arises rather than taking the time and energy to create formal training programs. Furthermore the training requirements are so special in some cases while big businesses may benefit from standard eLearning products on the market.

Managers' lack of commitment for eLearning is usually a challenge reported by every organization. There is a wide array of issues involved with managers' preferences, decision making, prioritizing and awareness. If they have a different learning characteristic or if they are with more traditional learning methods, the adoption of eLearning obtains more resistance. We also commonly see that while young employees have grown up with technology, many older managers prefer to avoid technological solutions. Reich and Schumermann (2003) interestingly make the point that many managers in organizations have difficulty "to accept the added value of further qualification of employees to the company in general" (section 3.1, paragraph 2). Especially many organizations struggling to maintain and financially support a employee and making employees more valuable may lead to future salary disputes.

4.2 Organization's Infrastructure dearth

Organizations often they lack in the appropriate infrastructure for eLearning model. This infrastructure may refer to things like employee to design and implement and good configuration setup in computers. Moreover, many organizations cannot have enough money to have their employees take time to focus on training because of the costs involvement in implementing the training, and also the opportunity costs involved with losing that employee time when employees are away from their jobs. However eLearning at home is an option, but it cannot be reasonable solution.

4.3 Organization's perspective to justify eLearning

The most common way to justify such need is by using a cost-benefit analysis. But sometimes organizations struggle to justify the actual need of eLearning. And moreover many organizations are unable to justify cost-benefit eLearning, since the people who are trying to justify its costs are the vendors and they themselves may stand to benefit the most through their sales. Finite improvements of eLearning generally demonstrate the enhancements in larger group of employees that in turn maximize the economic growth; thus, organizations are the ones leading the implementation and development of eLearning. Hence organizations need to discover the ways to substantiate eLearning by using other justification methods. There are few probable reasons to support the use of eLearning in an organization such as maximizing idle learning materials, saving time, allowing employees Knowledge expansion for future use, geographically connecting with isolated resources and making employee's time free to utilize eLearning for further enhancement of an employee. Though these justifications need some dollars to act, but the most of the employee time is saved by the way that time can be used efficiently by an organization for their other needs.

4.4 Organization's Indulgent Need of Training

Organization's at times do not understand their actual training needs, this is because they do not have a training specialist (or) a department solely dedicated to analyze the businesses needs and performance gaps of an organization. However the manager/director of the organization could be occupied with other tasks. This is the most and big common challenge for eLearning in an organization. Hence employees in organizations usually must take care of variety of job responsibilities. But most of their job description and primary responsibilities get lost in the crisis-driven working atmosphere. When conducting an in-house needs analysis, an organization can easily identify skillset of an employee that directly address a defined performance gap.

Moreover many organizations can easily do this with a training needs analysis. Because every employee in organization may have a completely different set of training needs. Hence integrating eLearning into multipurpose tools can address as many of the challenges. And also an organization must determine how eLearning can best fit into their strategic goals. Even though this may not be an active plan for developing a learning culture (or) for training employees. But the organization should have certainly a set of strategic goals and it might have number of projects that is implementing those goals. Hence eLearning can contribute to that in such a way it serves as a just-in-time training resources and also it can act as a knowledge management tool.

5. The eLearning - Organization Success

The eLearning is not just training tool which provides a methodology to train an employee. And also eLearning opportunities enable a manager to closely watch the performance of employee, and they can take a measure to improve employee skills in such way it brings the sustained eLearning in organization. To bring this act into organization there are few recommendations like combining eLearning and learning culture with the strategic goals and activities of the organization, encourage web knowledge of an employee, then organization can hire, maintain and train a good training professional.

However aligning the eLearning with the organization strategic plan is critical step. It requires that the organization's managers and employee find the time to determine where they are, where they want to go both collectively and individually, and how to proceed so that eLearning is multipurpose and addresses as many challenges as possible. The eLearning solutions and strategies entails an employee to intuitively navigate through a new program, it also entails understanding the new technologies that come out – including wikis, web conferencing, sharing screens, and content management systems.

The final need of an organization is to have at least one good training professional (Rosenberg, 2001). Though most organizations do not have a training department or even a training specialist, it is important that the staff has someone who can play the role of designated training professional, even if he or she is a subject matter expert on a completely different field. This designated individual would ideally receive training in both instructional systems design and educational technology applications, and in turn would be able to be responsible for things such as: identifying training needs that can be addressed via eLearning, reviewing products and staying briefed on free training resources, constantly learning about eLearning opportunities and promoting eLearning wherever applicable (Rosenberg, 2001).

If the organization's training professional desires to create online content or tests, there are authoring tools available that are simple to use. They often use templates and can even have a learning management system built into them – all are inexpensive alternatives to having modules designed for specific niche skills that small organizations often require (Tyler, 2001). Having one or two subject matter experts receive training in ISD and educational technology is enough to give any organization the manpower it needs to begin integrating eLearning without inflicting major costs.

6. Organizations Strategies for eLearning

Multipurpose eLearning can be seen as eLearning that solves a number of problems. It may serve as a training method, a communication network, a knowledge management system, an education system and other useful tools. By improving communication among employees, whether in the same office or around the world, by giving staff a portal through which they can trade information and develop projects, by creating a system through which the organization's memory can be maintained and managed through tools such as a contacts database, online bulletin board, shared address book, and shared folders, small organizations can find ways to integrate learning into their day-to-day activities and improve efficiency and effectiveness. The goal here is both to train fleets of people (people in projects, volunteers, etc) and also to use eLearning to capture expertise of certain staff members, to give better accessibility to organizational memory, to improve the organization's knowledge management, and, of course, to train and improve the workforce.

This idea of eLearning being multipurpose is an important one for every organization. Whereas a large corporation could cost justify an eLearning program that delivers skills training for one specific skill, a small organization might prefer to use eLearning to create a web-based tool that can serve three functions simultaneously: a reservoir for expertise from an expert, a training aid for employees, and a marketing piece that will attract new business.

Thus makes organizations to seek eLearning for knowledge-based content, especially if the content will remain consistent over time or if the training must be reproduced often or occasionally. The ease at which video can now be captured and edited, and the effectiveness that is possible by including it into simple and familiar training mediums such movies played on Flash Player or PowerPoint, all make this a very appropriate strategy for small organizations.

6.1 Sustained Virtual Networks for an Organization

Combining eLearning with virtual networks is a multipurpose way to address a number of challenges. Nearly every organization in the world, no matter how financially restricted, owns and maintains a web page. Web pages have become the cornerstone of businesses worldwide, and the same idea can be used to create an organization's intranet delivering just-in-time training. Informational resources, such as electronic filing cabinets, online reports, and important links, as well as PowerPoint presentations, discussion boards, bulletin boards, webcasts and conference rooms can all be easily made part of these virtual networks that are essentially glorified web portals for a select internal crowd. This type of integration of strategic planning, improved communications, and eLearning can surely benefit a wide variety of small organizations. Partnerships can be critically important for assembling the resources to develop effective tools and portals (Bonk, 2002). Shared portals can meet the needs of multiple small organizations.

There are also types of software for online workgroups that allow real time collaboration and pose similar benefits, but there are also many free or almost free constructivist learning tools, such as blogs, podcasts, Moodle and wikis. Seitzinger (2006) explains a number of new, very inexpensive ways to create an online learning system using these types of tools whereby multiple people can actively contribute, there is plenty of interaction among participants, and the content can reflect goals that the group is working toward.

There are free and inexpensive resources that allow an individual to create an entire eLearning lesson from start to finish. There are templates and applications available that do not require knowledge of advanced computer programs. Hedden (2006) gives a very detailed explanation of how she single handedly created a set of eLearning lessons that were not just effective training tools but also marketing tools for themselves. Employees in small businesses and nonprofits often have niche skills that are not in demand by masses of large businesses but for which there is a significant audience. The Internet makes marketing eLearning lessons for niche skills to people throughout the world very easy.

6.2 Significant Knowledge Management System in Organization

Many of the tools and ideas explained with virtual networks can also be used to improve organization's knowledge management. Knowledge management system is a computer database that manages an organization's knowledge; it allows for effective storage and distribution of expertise and knowledge. Much time is wasted just trying to find information and doing things like helping other employees become up-to-date on new technology, and tracking accounts. Thus Knowledge management system is necessary for any organization. It will assist with day-to-day work; it will also harden the organizational memory, and make transition and new employee orientation easier. It also becomes easier to grow and extend staff into new geographic areas when this information can be accessed from a distance. Knowledge management system is a necessary development for any organization's sustainable, long-term growth.

Recent ideas have also surfaced that to show new application of eLearning for knowledge management and organizational memory. The organization suffers from many of the same challenges. Hence investment in creating eLearning can enable the staff to capture important information, processes, and levels of expertise, and make them available to other employees and partners in the future. The organization was able to capitalize on those opportunities because they had one good

training professional who had a mastery of educational technology applications (mainly Macromedia). Ultimately it has captured important technical information and it is being used to capture all relevant information about employee and training staff and partners.

The organization often sends out packages to groups around the world. These packages hold seeds, informational booklets, posters, videos, books, CDs and other materials that will assist the group to carry out a tree planting project. Creating these packages is a long, tenuous job that entails preparing customs slips, selecting species, assembling contents, and entering all the information into a database. This job was usually done by staff technicians whose time is always in demand. Volunteers were available but were not familiar with this process and it was a gamble to invest the staff time to train each new volunteer who came in. The solution was to document the entire process from beginning to end with video and pictures, and the result was an instructional video. Now, technicians save an average of three days of staff time per month, every month, because of their new eLearning tool.

6.3 Training– Business Synthesis

The success of organizations in the future will depend highly on their ability to blend the mission of the organization with the missions and goals of the individual workers (Seufert, 2001). Hence most organizations seek to hire and maintain the most talented and dedicated employees. Along with experience, education is a major factor in today's workforce. A different strategy for helping organizations to benefit from eLearning is through formal education programs that will most likely be utilized through a partnership with an online university. This can be characterized as .com meets .edu (Olsen, 2000) or .org meets .edu. Educational opportunities are often as good as for employees. Education and training can even be seen as an employment benefit that can offset the desire for high salaries.

A strategy for organizations is to partner with community colleges, online universities or other colleges that have certificate or graduate programs that complement the work performed by the employees. Since organizations have corporate universities or education reimbursements. This helps the organization by having its employee receive a constant flow of useful information, it helps the employees who desire to increase their knowledge and education level, and this type of partnership also helps the colleges who benefit from both the publicity and tuition. The integration of business and education should be an objective for every organization to improve its economic growth.

Conclusion

The eLearning success is crucial because an unsuccessful effort to implement e-Learning will be clearly reflected in terms of the return of investment to organizations. One of the most crucial prerequisites for successful implementation of e-Learning is the need for careful consideration of the underlying pedagogy, or how learning takes place online. The purpose of this paper is to identify the pedagogical principles underlying the teaching and learning activities that constitute effective e-Learning. To overcome the above mentioned challenge in this paper, organizations need to have key components in place: a clear organizational strategic plan, web knowledge of employee and one good training professional. Once it is all in the right place the combination of a motivated manager and the employee's designated training professional can be able to identify the just-in-time eLearning opportunities. And also they can identify the ways in which multipurpose tools can help the struggling employee to promote multiple goals, training new employees, capturing expertise by improving communication. The organization's training professional must also continually work to update the web knowledge of an employee on new technologies and capabilities.

Sustained eLearning in organizations requires building the capacity of the organization and the capacity of individuals who comprise it. By instilling key employees with the skills they need to slowly advance small projects and promote eLearning and finding ways to capture useful information and transmit it as an organized instructional system. Any organization can develop a set of useful eLearning tools. However it is important to promote both eLearning and a learning culture is a challenge. A group of employees begins to see the individual and organizational growth that comes from the combination of business and sustained education; it is easier to see how eLearning can be integrated into larger projects, such as virtual networks and knowledge management systems, for the benefit of everyone who involved in the organization tree.

References

- [1]. Berge, Z.L. (2001). *Sustaining Distance Training: Integrating Learning Technologies into the Fabric of the Enterprise*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- [2]. Bonk, C.J. (2002, January). Online training in an online world.
- [3]. John Leary and Zane L. Berge, Ph.D. "Challenges and Strategies for Sustaining eLearning in Small Organizations"
- [4]. DG Education & Culture European Commission. (2005, June 27). What are the SME's needs related to e-learning?
- [5]. Hamburg, I., Lindecke, C., & Terstriep, J. (2004). eLearning – A chance for small and medium sized enterprises.
- [6]. Hedden, H. (2006) Creating an independent online course for a niche skill.

- [7]. McCullough, C. (2005, August 8). Obstacles to small business usage of eLearning in Europe. WebProNews.com.
- [8]. Olsen, P. (2000). Dot.Com meets Dot.Edu: Trends in learning partnerships.
- [9]. PJB Associates. Organizational learning: The role of SME clusters.
- [10]. Reich, K. & Scheuermann, F. (2003). E-Learning challenges in Austrian SME's.
- [11]. Rosenberg, Marc. (2001). e-Learning: Strategies for Delivering Knowledge in the Digital Age. McGraw-Hill.
- [12]. Seitzinger, J. (2006, July 31). Be constructive: Blogs, podcasts, and wikis as constructivist learning tools. Learning Solutions eMagazine.
- [13]. Seufert, S. (2001). E-Learning business models: Framework and best practice examples.
- [14]. SOLT Transnational Online Learning Trainer Network (SOLT). (2004, April 12). Engaging small businesses in Elearning.
- [15]. Tyler, K. (2001, May). E-Learning: Not just for enormous companies anymore - distance education. HR Magazine.
- [16]. Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration, Volume X, Number III, Fall 2007 University of West Georgia, Distance Education Center.
- [17]. Thavamalar Govindasamy, "Successful implementation of e-Learning Pedagogical considerations"
- [18]. Keith Bachman, "Corporate E-Learning : Exploring a new frontier".

