

Delivering Effective and Measurable eLearning

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ABSTRACT

In the past decade eLearning has undergone a significant amount of development both in technology as well as research and application of pedagogical models. The willingness of organizations to expand their learning distribution capabilities as well as the increased pressure for learning on demand independent of time or place formulate opportunities and a challenging environment for eLearning exploitation. This has resulted in the proliferation of many platforms for eLearning promising that adoption would be a panacea and bring about automatic success. Unfortunately, in most cases the performance of eLearning solutions has been overestimated. Poor learning outcomes, poor instructional design, and the resistance of learners to engage in eLearning are a few undesirable results of eLearning implementations. This paper outlines a framework which justifies eLearning as a value adding process, both for learners and teachers, within the context of the organizations they serve. The objective of the paper is to stimulate dialogue on approaches to implementing measurable and effective eLearning.

INTRODUCTION

eLearning as we know it today was triggered by the rapid advances in multimedia and Internet technologies during the 1990s. Organizations across the globe have scrambled to adopt eLearning. The primary driver for early adopters was to either replace or supplement classroom

learning as a means of cost savings. Executives and administrators were willing to invest in eLearning because the value proposition was intuitive and simple: the cost of producing eLearning content and putting it on-line or on CD-ROMs was lower than the costs for learner travel, instructors, facilities, and resources. The simple view, whether for corporate or education settings, was that with eLearning, you can now reach a wider audience and allow individuals to learn at their own pace. Some other key trends and drivers for eLearning adoption included:

- Business and Industry Trends
 - Globalization and the resulting distribution of an enterprise's employees
 - The "real-time" enterprise movement which demanded that information be available immediately to employees to perform tasks
 - Compliance and safety training along with the associated record-keeping which rapidly became an administrative burden that was error-prone
 - Technology to streamline and automate business processes became a mantra
- Education Trends
 - Distribution of higher education institutions to serve students beyond the main campus to satellite locations
 - Broadening access to education
 - Educators burdened with more

tasks [not sure what this means]

- Spending on education being cut or remaining flat while administrators having to serve more students

There was obvious early hype about eLearning and its benefits, primarily driven by the vendor community with promises of vast performance returns and cost savings. Learning specialists, not truly convinced of the benefits, have always been skeptical of eLearning. In corporate settings, there are many arguments for and against eLearning as a mainstream e-business model, while in education, eLearning has demonstrated mixed results. The eLearning vendor landscape has and continues to change significantly.

Today, there is a wide body of data to begin assessing some of the failures and successes of eLearning. There is a good combination of primary information sources from eLearning adopters who share their experiences, as well as a considerable body of research on the effects of eLearning and technology-based learning.

The general assessment is that eLearning has not met its early hype and promise for several reasons, including:

- Organizations have failed to factor the organizational strategy and objectives in the design and implementation of eLearning programs: training individuals on a particular task with a view toward organizations goals; business function and individual competencies and skills; and, organization performance maximizes value. [I do not understand this last 3 points]
- Organizations have not applied sound and proven learning principles in designing and offering effective content. Usability, interactivity, and new generation learning concepts like simulations and games are important issues often overlooked.

- Global organizations have not taken into consideration the implications of language and culture for the design and delivery of eLearning. Building content in English and then simply translating the text without a cultural perspective on learning renders eLearning content which is ineffective across audiences.

We will focus on the first point, the need to deliver effective and measurable eLearning in this paper.