

Successful e-Learning

Moving e-Learning into the Business

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e-Learning is not about technology, tools and content etc, it is about training people and the resulting effect this has on your organisation. In any economic situation, good or bad, employee development and skills building remain essential requirements for success. The workforce is an organisation's number one asset and corporate productivity is directly impacted by employee capability.

e-Learning can deliver enormous gains but how do you justify the initial investment and ensure that it is aligned with business goals?

In this document we'll describe why it's essential to move e-Learning into the Business, and discuss how to develop a compelling business case for successful adoption and implementation of e-Learning in your organisation.

Working with the Business

HR should not be the only keeper of e-Learning in the organisation, the business needs to get more involved in the rollout in order to support their business objectives. The organisational results really change when the business runs e-Learning initiatives.

Before you can measure the benefits of an e-Learning initiative, you must understand what you need to measure. You need to identify tangible value, items that are easily measured. Simply throwing courses online is not a viable model for success.

Business unit managers need to be the training's primary sponsor. One should talk to the Business Unit Manager about outcomes and what you would like to achieve such as increased Sales, quicker new product deployment, etc.

You need to involve the business to ensure real value is produced. Planning questions should include:

- What are our specific e-Learning goals? (eg, train more in less time, increase sales, etc)
- How will you align e-Learning to the needs of the business?
- What groups and how many employees require or desire access to the courses?
- What kinds of e-Learning courses are desired?
- Do employees want (or have) an appetite to learn online?

- As e-Learning will not supplant all training, how will the two relate?
- What are the critical success factors?
- How will results be measured?
- Who will be responsible for the rollout and subsequent maintenance?
- Which executive will be the champion of the e-Learning initiative?

Firstly you need to gain agreement on the business problems to be solved and the value of solving them. Then you need to focus on how you intend to solve them.

Establish a baseline measure of current performance, and clearly indicate how performance will be tracked and reported. Successful business based e-learning is all about continual measurement and fine tuning. Remember, management is looking for results!

To ensure success you should also plan on how the organisation will market the initiative to users. e-Learning still faces an adoption barrier without the appropriate management push but support from top management will get people engaged and is vital for success.

To answer all these questions and ensure success, a number of planning activities are required, these include:

- **Needs Assessment** – to determine if the initiative is a ‘must have’ or a ‘nice to have’
- **Requirements Analysis** – to document and understand internal stakeholder needs
- **User Research** – to determine to what extent employees welcome and will use e-Learning
- **Feasibility Study** – to determine the potential barriers to success and whether the initiative can be implemented in a reasonable time, at a reasonable cost.
- **Strategic Plan** – that documents specific objectives and goals and how they align with your organisation’s goals
- **Communication Plan** – on how the organisation will market the initiative to ensure use
- **Business Case** – proving the cost benefit analysis and ROI
- **Measurement Plan** - detailing the critical success factors and performance measures (eg use, ROI etc)

Building your Business Case

A business case will offer a clear statement of the business problems and your proposed solution, as well as provide measurements of success. In essence, it describes your organisation's current status versus the desired status, and how the organisation can achieve these goals.

The target audience for your e-Learning business case will most likely be comprised of both business unit managers and senior executives—the people who will ultimately give your proposal the business and financial support it needs to succeed. Consequently, it is important that your business case be aligned with their goals and “points of pain.” **A well-formulated business case will support the planning and decision making processes of these two groups.**

The Business Case also needs to include the cost benefit analysis and ROI.

Calculating ROI enables organisations to evaluate training investments in comparison with other investments the organisation makes; however, it also allows organisations to compare a learning solution's monetary benefit with the solution's cost. Calculating ROI verifies that the solution's cost justifies the benefit it provides.

Some of the major benefits to an organisation that e-Learning initiatives can produce are outlined below:

- **Reduced overall cost** is the single most influential factor in adopting e-learning. The elimination of costs associated with instructor's salaries, meeting room rentals, travel, lodging, and meals are directly quantifiable. The reduction of time spent away from the job by employees may be the most positive offshoot though.
- **Learning times reduced** an average of 40% to 60%.
- **Increased retention** and application to the job averages an increase of 25% over traditional methods.
- **Consistent delivery** of content is possible and enables self-paced e-learning.
- **Expert knowledge** is communicated, but more importantly captured, with good e-learning and knowledge management systems.
- **Proof of completion and certification**, essential elements of training certification can be automatically recorded and are auditable.
- **Just-in-time learning** - Online learners can take training just before they need it rather than enrolling in a program months before they need the training or refresher class.

HCS - Aligning People and technology

The Human Capital Solutions (HCS) Group specialises in assisting business develop content online in a defined and measureable way, we bridge the gap between HR and IT, assisting organisations to optimise HR and Learning Strategies through a mixture of professional services, content provision and IT solutions.

We help people and technology to work together smoothly and efficiently, bringing out the best in each, to achieve the highest possible return on investment in both.

We are flexible, approachable and passionate about what we do, and we pride ourselves on old fashioned customer service. Our customers trust us to provide realistic advice and solutions that work. They know that we are brand agnostic, so they get the right solution every time.

With a proven track record of providing quality services to the Learning and Development community, HCS has an impressive customer base that includes clients such as the Queensland Government, Allianz, NSW Lotteries, Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Suncorp.

HCS is a member of the ComOps group of companies and is quality accredited.

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