

Why Would Employees Embrace e-Learning? How Can You Help Them Do So?

White Paper

Why Would Employees Embrace e-Learning? How Can You Help Them Do So?

This White Paper is for companies that are considering implementing e-Learning in the workplace. It addresses the issues in relation with e-Learning acceptance by employees.

© 2001 Danielle Vallée

www.daniellevallee.com

danielle@daniellevallee.com

This White paper looks at how employees perceive e-Learning and how they are likely to react to its implementation in the workplace.

What do you think will be your employees' reaction to an e-Learning implementation announcement?

"Not another company initiative!"

"What's that?"

"It's about time!"

These extreme variations in possible reactions to an early announcement demonstrate the importance of properly preparing employees to an e-Learning implementation.

The first type of reaction, i.e. "Not another company initiative!" carries with it a high potential for e-Learning failure. This means that unless you manage to change those employees' attitude into a more positive one, you are likely to spend your money for nothing.

The second type of reaction, i.e. "What's that?", carries as much potential for a positive outcome than for a negative one because you don't know how things will turn out once they find out what e-Learning is about. It is

important that you take appropriate action to influence that outcome.

The third reaction, i.e. "It's about time!" will play to your advantage unless you fail to meet employees' expectations. That is why preparing yourself carefully is important.

Preparing Yourself and Preparing Employees

In order to properly prepare for e-Learning, managers have to analyze the current situation, both from an employer's perspective and from the employees' standpoint.

This is particularly important because humans tend to have different reactions toward the unknown. The most common reaction is fear and fear rarely brings a positive outcome. In fact, unsubstantiated fears can take over a situation in advance, and cause quite a lot of damage and grief to concerned parties.

Company's Expectations

Your company obviously has specific expectations when implementing e-Learning. But these expectations may not be the same as those of employees. However, both sets of expectations are not necessarily incompatible.

It is important that your company establishes a clear strategy, based on corporate objectives. While doing your analysis, you might find out that expectations vary from one manager to the other, as well as with those of high management. It is necessary to establish a consensus about the company's expectations before addressing employees' expectations. For instance, company's expectations might have to do with:

- Savings on training and travelling expenses
- Return on Investment (ROI)

- Measurement of performance, customer service improvement
- Mandatory vs. optional training
- Employees training on their own time

Establishing a strategy with precise goals will greatly facilitate your job when preparing to present the project to employees.

Employees' Expectations

How employees perceive e-Learning will make a difference in how well it is accepted and how effective it is. Employees' expectations are more along the following lines:

- Training conditions
- Training environment
- Quality and dynamism of training material
- Advancement and career prospects

The company's expectations have to be realistic and fair toward employees. For instance, one could not be expected to concentrate on learning about complex, intensive technical subjects if constantly interrupted. Training conditions are important: quiet time is necessary in order to learn effectively. Interruptions should be eliminated or kept to a minimum, and the available technology should be adequate to support the training delivery effectively.

The way training material is prepared is also important: both in its presentation and its effectiveness. It must be engaging and practical.

Don't expect people to be interested in boring stuff. This is particularly important if the learners are used to the Web and to high levels of interaction and entertainment. Your material will be compared to other existing material and it must measure up. Who said that people cannot learn and be entertained at the same

time? Remember that entertaining material will be remembered better than boring material where the learner tunes out.

Important attributes of engaging training material:

- Dynamic
- Interesting
- Entertaining
- Easy to memorize
- Easy to consult for later reference

Practical attributes

- Useful
- Realistic
- Challenging
- Positive element for advancement

Think “Client”

To make a success out of the learning process, it is necessary to understand the learner’s point of view. With e-Learning, there are specific conditions that are not seen with classroom training. For example, a learner has complete control over the training process. Learners can go at their own pace and can drop-out at any time. That is why we see an increasing trend of regarding learners as clients that need to be “seduced” into learning. In other words, you need to sell them the idea of learning.

This means that learners need to see what the benefits are for them to do the learning, especially when learning on their own. This entails presenting the learning material in a way that attracts rather than something imposed. They can also be presented with intelligent challenges to make it more interesting.

Unfortunately, clients or users are rarely consulted in an e-Learning implementation

process. If they were regarded as clients, the need to consult them would become obvious.

Other Considerations

There are other aspects that a company will be faced with when implementing e-Learning. It would be an advantage to explore those issues before they actually happen in order to be prepared to address them.

Some issues are quite delicate. One of them is employee empowerment.

e-Learning means that employees will be managing their own learning. This gives employees a degree of empowerment that your company needs to be ready to give them. Employee empowerment is something that will likely have ramifications throughout the company. You need to be ready to evaluate and address this issue.

You will also need to prepare for other issues, such as mandatory vs. optional training, technology availability, self-motivation to learn, drop-out rates... It would be wise to have contingency plans addressing these issues.

Preparing Employees and Getting Ready to Meet Their Expectations

Your strategy should be based on corporate objectives and employees' needs. Your plan should outline your e-Learning objectives, but it should also encompass employees' objectives. Look at how these objectives can be attained. Analyze the employees' situation and review working and learning conditions in view of those objectives.

The key to success is setting winning conditions for both the company and the employees. To do so, determine what employees want and need. Outline benefits for

them. Sell your proposition in a winning manner and provide incentives. Consult with them. Prepare an initial prototype or example, have something to show them when first introducing the e-Learning concept. Generally, people have a hard time visualizing abstract concepts, whatever their level is in the company.

Have employees take an active part in the initial phases. For instance, you could organize focus groups, brainstorming sessions, course prototype design and testing. Participating in the preparation will make them commit themselves to the project.

Incentives

Incentives can be an effective mean for e-Learning acceptance. This would be particularly important in a situation where employees would be expected to learn on their own time. For instance, a company could provide Internet subscriptions or even the use of laptops to employees, in exchange for a given number of training hours on their personal time.

Just remember that the more you ask from employees, the more you will have to give them in return. Failure to do so will make them feel exploited and will undermine your success.

Available Resources

To help companies with issues regarding acceptance of e-Learning by employees, a special seminar has been prepared. This seminar is now available to companies that are about to implement e-Learning. It explains why and how e-Learning is useful for both the company and its employees, and outlines specific benefits for individuals. It explains how individuals can use e-Learning to further their career.

Web Site

www.daniellevallee.com

Online Seminars

www.daniellevallee.com/seminars

Live Seminars

www.daniellevallee.com/events/en

Resource Center

www.daniellevallee.com/rescent

White Papers

www.daniellevallee.com/whitepap

email

danielle@daniellevallee.com

© 2001 Danielle Vallée

To know more about this seminar:

www.daniellevallee.com/seminars

Here are a few independent sources for neutral information about e-Learning and Web-based training:

***e-Learning as a Business Asset
From A to Z, Everything e-Learning and
Web-Based Training Can Be***

2001, 478 pages
Danielle Vallee

This book contains a wealth of information about all aspects related to e-Learning, from technical to strategic, from conversion of existing training material and production of new Web-based training to selecting a learning management system. From obtaining high level management support to following-up after implementation. For more information:

www.daniellevallee.com

White papers available for free distribution:

This white paper and the following white papers are available for free distribution, provided that they are not modified:

- *Looking at Learning Management Systems: Finding Neutral and Comprehensive Information in the e-Learning Jungle*
- *Helping Learning Management System Providers better serve their market*

All are available at:

<http://www.daniellevallee.com/whitepap>