

Winning the e-learning race

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Plenty of organizations have implemented e-learning. Some are eager to talk about the challenges they faced and you can learn from their experiences at conference presentations, in articles and in books. Some of the themes you will pick up from the e-learning experiences of other people's experience are:

- . Implementing e-learning is complex
 - . Most organizations are still experimenting with e-learning
 - . Organizations are using a variety of approaches for implementing e-learning
- Implementing e-learning means far more than subscribing to the courses of a service provider
- . Implementing e-learning is about project management, change management, and risk management

The following set of four nesting tables lists 17 elements will help you deal with some of the complexity of e-learning. The 17 items are arranged by order of precedence with the idea that number 1 needs to be done before number 2 and so on. Implementing e-learning does not rival the adrenal rush you may have experienced in starting a relay race but there are some similarities as the starter points a pistol and shouts: On your mark, get ready, get set, go. Bang!

Racing strategy

Follow the 17 steps listed below to manage e-learning effectively and win the race! There may be hurdles along the way. Perhaps some branches to trip you, other racers to slow you down, a change in the weather. You will need to remain nimble, sharp and fleet of foot. Our 17 steps are not a rigorous roadmap that you stray from at your peril like a path through the jungle. Rather this is an approach to adapt to your particular situation. In this race, you can change lanes if you need to.

On your mark

You need to do your homework before launching an e-learning program. Prepare yourself. Clarify the management structures, grasp the context, identify how people learn best, and plug yourself into the latest research about e-learning.

1. Management: Define structure of coordinating body. Articulate roles, responsibilities. Select champions. Explain management framework to all stakeholders
2. Context: Identify driving and restraining forces for the acceptance of e-learning. Identify steps needed to attenuate the restraining forces. Explain findings to main stakeholders.
3. Learners: Determine how they learn best. Identify their performance gaps, experiences, and expectations.
4. Research on e-learning: Explore research and anecdotal information to determine how to successfully implement e-learning in your environment. Explain findings to main stakeholders.

Get ready

In order to get yourself ready to implement e-learning you need to do some serious thinking about technology, business case, business model, and evaluation.

5. Technology: Identify what technology is available; what technology will be needed and the role of standards such as SCORM. Develop a relationship with your technical advisors.
6. Business case: Identify the why, what, how of implementing e-learning in business terms. Provide estimated costs and cost savings. Obtain approval for a phased project.
7. Business model: Select the best model or models: integrated/de-centralized, minimal/optimal, make/buy, independent/co-operative, national/international.
8. Evaluation: Develop an evaluation strategy, instruments, reports, and determine how evaluation results will be used with each phase.

Get set

As you slip into the starting blocks, you should be concentrating on communication, administration, content, and methodologies.

9. Communication: Identify who communicates to whom. How. What and when. Identify what questions they have about e-learning. Build a change management strategy to answer people's questions about the new initiative.
10. Administration: Define the need for data on participation, follow-up mechanisms. Determine which LMS is best for this role.
11. Content: Identify what needs to be taught and developed internally and externally.
12. Methodologies: Based on information collected above select training methodologies. Identify extent of blending of conventional and e-learning. Select from four types of e-learning (informal, self-directed, instructor led and performance support tools.

Go

Bang!! The race has started. You still have important work to do associated with human resources, selecting a starting point, implementing, evaluating, and constantly re-jigging your approaches.

13. Human resources: Identify roles of instructors, developers, and administrators. Select and train them.
14. Starting point: Identify which topics are best to teach at the beginning in order to foster high levels of usage, understanding, and buy-in. There is an opportunity here to do something innovative. Follow the pain, find a topic that is not taught now and can be learned successfully with e-learning
15. Implement: Launch cautiously. Communicate extensively with all users: learners, supervisors, instructors, and administrators.
16. Evaluate: Conduct an evaluation with solid data and soft data from stories.
17. Re-jig: Constantly review progress and revise items 1-16 as required.

Winning

If you are competent, healthy, and mentally-prepared you will run a good race. Watch for hazards. Keep your concentration. Pace yourself. Remember, you are running a relay race. You are not alone. Be careful about passing the baton. Collaborate carefully. Foster partnerships. Support your team-mates before, during, and after the race.

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