

E-LEARNING AND ITS APPLICATION FOR TRAINING IN ORGANISATION: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The report emphasises on the importance of applying e-learning in the training procedure of an organisation and the challenges faced in doing so. The aim is to utilise the innovation in technology for the efficient performance of the organisation. In the current era, e-learning has come across as a revolutionary dimension to convey education, information and training in a swift and efficient manner. Training is essential for transformation and reformation of an organisation according to the changing requirements. E-learning provides proficient guidelines in implementing advanced training techniques. This report especially addresses the hurdles faced in application of e-learning in an organisation and provides in depth analysis of its importance in the success of an organisation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Research is a secondary study where existing literature is reviewed on the subject. Research methodology is exploratory research where the subject is critically analysed using existing academic resources.

Implications: The research will benefit organisations that are trying to modernise their training programs but are hesitant due to uncertainties. It will provide them guidance as to how they can implement e-learning training programs without any complications. It will also help them in catering to any glitches arising during the training programs.

Findings: It has been found that application of e-learning in training would greatly facilitate organisations that are operating in different countries and enable increased consistency in business their approach. However the implementation of e-learning is not very simple and requires commitment from management in terms of cost and patience for e-learning to benefit in training and improving employees.

Originality: The research papers attempts to review application of e-learning for employee training and its benefit in improving employee performance.

Keywords: e-learning; training; implementation; challenges; Information and Communication Technology; ICT.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations today are facing increasing challenges of survival in fast moving economies; the advent of globalisation fuelled by technology has brought about new revolution in the business world. There is an influx of different approaches in the last two decades that has enabled business to redefine business modalities and options. The paper attempts to review application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the business by specifically focusing on e-learning as a medium to improve organisation training opportunities.

ICT AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ICT is a acronym that defines Information and Communication Technology. While the dynamics of ICT tends to be changing every day, it is very hard to define what can be constituted as part of ICT and what is not. Generally, it refers to existing digital technological tools that individuals, businesses and other institutions can use to store, manipulate and disseminate information. ICT can be found in the form of personal computers, televisions, radio, e-mail and other Internet-based tools that allow people to communicate and share information. In fact, ICT is said to have an influential impact on every aspect of human life, whether its studies, business or social networking. ICT provides an important avenue for learning. Given that much of the youngsters live in the digital world of television and online reality, ICT has developed programs and channels that can make use of this underlying behaviour of individuals. TV programs and channels have been specifically developed for toddlers and children that educate them through an interactive and appropriate environment that measure up to their learning skills. Likewise, Internet and mobile apps have also been developed for the same reason for learners whether they are four years old or Master level students. The ICT provides a rich and more focused learning environment for each targeted individual. Acknowledging the fact that technology has been highly integrated in the society, ICT is being highly used in schools and colleges to provide modern and contemporary experiences and resource. Learners would be more interested in learning ways that coincide

with their interests. Moreover, ICT allows communications channels to open up and sustain between students, teachers and parents. Parents can monitor what their children are doing and how well they are progressing in it. Older students can proactively use social networking to catch up on class activities, home projects and course contents while teachers find it an easy way for instant feedback. Course contents developed by ICT means tend to be more attractive and strives to improve the learning agility of people faster than traditional learning techniques such as classroom learning and the uses of books, that many find quite boring. Thus, ICT provides an advance way of communication and it is a learning method that has emerged around the world for effective and improved learning opportunities.

ICT AND ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

ICT is increasingly being used in various business contexts and seem to have grave implications in organisations. The advantages of using information and communication in organisations include, increased customer satisfaction, better workplace practices and improved decision making and highly interactive and stimulated workforce. One of its greatest applications is in building organisational learning. Organisational learning refers to the process of knowledge creation, retention and transference within the organisational structure. ICT tools such as traditional hardware devices such as computers and software such as spreadsheets helps to retain and disseminate valuable information relating to finance, sales and costs. It is vital for employees to know how to operate these functions in order to complete their daily tasks. Given that technological framework around the world is changing with increased globalisation, businesses are faced with fear of losing competitiveness in the global environment. Thus, it is very important for them to adapt to ICT and improve their workforce's skills and knowledge in order to maintain its competitiveness domestically and globally. ICT helps in information and knowledge being transferred faster and further. Given applications such as video conferencing, e-mail and phones have contributed to employee learning over a great geographical dispersion. ICT helps to provide knowledge and skills to employees exactly when it's to be applied and used. ICT means of learning helps workers to access information that is customised to their specific needs. It enables employees to be proactive and always ready to learn. In contrast to traditional techniques of learning, ICT helps businesses to lower the cost of training and educating its workforce. ICT reduces travelling costs and costs in terms of loss of output while the employee is held for training, mainly because ICT provides learning opportunities that employees can use anywhere and at any time. Thus, businesses can incorporate many benefits that ICT has to offer in teaching practices to its employees. It is a fast and cost-effective way of training and development that is being highly utilised by businesses all around the world.

E-LEARNING IN ORGANISATIONS

The ultra-dynamics of technology and the advent of the Internet have been reshaping businesses and their operational structures. The information technology revolution has not only equipped businesses with advanced opportunities to connect and communicate with external forces such as customers, suppliers, competitors, government and NGOs, but also has influenced the way an organisation may communicate and link with its internal employees of all levels through training, development and further education. Cooper (2007) observed that businesses are finding ways to incept new technological realities and incorporate them in their pursuit to maintain a more skilled, advanced and competitive workforce, which is why, the e-learning phenomena, is being more accepted as a general workplace norm and is increasingly substituting face to face classroom teaching and training sessions in many businesses.

Derouin et al. (2005) defined e-learning in an organisational environment as the stipulation, management and support of training and development activities, whether on the job or off the job, making use of ICTs, such as computers, mobiles and Internet-based tools to develop and execute training contents to the intended target. E-learning tools allow employees to learn at their own pace. Since the material is available to them throughout the day, employees can receive training at work, home or even when sitting at a coffee shop. Derouin et al. (2005) supplemented the fact by proposing that training time does not interfere with their work, unlike traditional on the job and off the job training sessions and thus, the business does not have to face the cost of losing production or services during training time. Secondly, it is very cost-effective for businesses especially when the targeted segment is geographically dispersed. Valuable resources are wasted on airfare, lodging and meals, but e-learning cuts these additional expenses, with its costs being the same despite the location and the number of people to be trained (Derouin et al., 2005).

Cooper (2007) proposed that since e-learning is seen as a vehicle for improving the quality of the workforce in terms of increased flexibility, proactive and skill development which should be reflected in the increased productivities and lesser grievances. How effective e-learning tools are for the organisation can be judged and identified on the basis of its outcomes. However, contrary to the numerous researches available in favour of e-learning applications in businesses, many concerns and debates still exist over its effectiveness. (Feldman et al., 2001) have centred their arguments on factors like sufficient financial resources embedded towards e-learning techniques, the relevance and quality of the e-learning contents, change management, the current technological infrastructure and management commitment. Despite these challenges, Derouin et al. (2005) predicted that e-learning would be the face of future business training operations and have been proven to be true. As employees become more tech-savvy, the businesses realise the gains from adopting e-learning, the phenomenon has a promising future.

E-LEARNING AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

E-learning basically involves training and education through the use of technology. Information technology has spread widely over the time and range of its application has diversified and extended (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). Now it has been adopted by the education centres and organisations for the purpose of education and training. In this method, the information is made available to all the people involved in the learning and training sessions through Internet and computers (Cheng et al., 2012). Tutors are also available through online sources, which provide people an easy access to the trainers.

While talking specifically about e-learning, it involves education and training of the students and employees through these online sources (Cheng et al., 2012). But the reason for adopting e-learning in both training and education are different. While in education, tutors mostly opt for this process when they want to increase the range of their knowledge and education system, making it easier to get access to the higher level of education (Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011). However in training, trainers opt for these sources to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their training system. Internet is the basic source and need for operating this e-learning procedure, and its application has increased over the time (Wang et al., 2011). Internet has a direct relation with this e-learning process and it is the reason for this massive and diversified adaptation of e-learning (Cheng et al., 2012). Technological advancement has also played a vital role for the increase of e-learning adaptation.

E-LEARNING CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Even though the use and application of e-learning has been increasing over the time, but it still has a long way to go in order to become the online and preferred option. There are certain organisations and units that find e-learning not as efficient or ineffective (Liaw and Huang, 2013). This complicates the matters a little bit because there are certain things for which physical presence of the employees and the trainers (Lee et al., 2011) are needed. There are certain limitations of e-learning, which are making it difficult for e-learning to reach the top position.

E-learning requires a cost for its initial set up. Its implementation can bring certain changes within the organisation. Organisations and firm have to develop a proper system for the application of these e-learning procedures (Liaw and Huang, 2013). This is where firms have to invest an substantial amount of money for the set up for the trainers and all the other related factors required for proper e-learning procedure. But again, ones the set up is done for this, e-learning could serve as a cost efficient method of training for organisations (Lee et al., 2011).

As e-learning bring certain changes within the organisation, then these organisations have to face resistance against this change as this method of training and learning might not be adopted by all the employees, as they would find it difficult to deal with the technological

advancement (Moore et al., 2011). This is basically a resistance to the change or development occurring within organisation. There are certain employees or managers who would find it difficult to adjust or are not that familiar with the technology (Wang et al., 2011). Hence this method of training would land them with even more difficulties.

One of these limitations includes the dependency of this training method over technology. No matter how reliable the technology has proven itself through the time, but any uncertainty could arise which makes it difficult to completely rely over technology (Moore et al., 2011). As this e-learning is also dependent upon technology, any kind of uncertainty like slow speed, low connectivity or any other challenges might affect the flow of this training and learning procedure, which might lead to the frustration of the trainers and the employees, which would ultimately spoil the intensions and continuity of the training process and people involved in it (Liaw and Huang, 2013). To deal with any kind of uncertainty, trainers are needed to be equipped properly. In order to train the employees, trainers need to get trained first so that they would be able to transfer and communicate information with the efficient use of this technology (Wang et al., 2011).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in global economy organisations need to remain technologically aware, e-learning is one of the rapidly used tool which has found great importance in business domain. The application of e-learning in training would greatly facilitate organisations who are operating in different countries and enable to increase consistency in business approach. However the implementation of e-learning is not very simple and requires commitment from management in terms of cost and patience for e-learning to benefit in training and improving employees and further contribute to improving organisation performance.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Ali Yousef Mahmud is a technology enthusiast hailing from Jordan, completed bachelor and Master in Information Technology followed by MBA in information's system from UK. Now candidate of PhD in information's system, have interest in communication technologies especially Mobile learning technologies and e-learning. Application of mobile learning can greatly facilitate learning and training opportunities in developing countries especially where access to basic learning facilities is limited. The writer therefore is focussing on research to utilise mobile learning and e-learning options to greater extend in Jordan.