

eLearning: Ready, Set, Go!

Bringing eLearning into your organization for the first time is more than just offering a bunch of courses to your employees with the expectation they will jump right in. The “here it is...have fun” approach many times ends up with a lot of money spent and employees not accessing the courses.

An eLearning initiative, like any successful company initiative, involves setting objectives, planning, developing a strategy, creating measurement systems, marketing, and dealing with organizational challenges. For many organizations eLearning adoption can result in competitive advantages in educating a geographically diverse workforce, having accessible learning 24x7, training large numbers for low per employee cost, as well as many other benefits specific to each organization. With so many potential benefits to be gained it makes sense to take the time to design your eLearning initiative for success.

This article addresses some of the components you will want to consider during your eLearning initiative:

1. Planning for the implementation
2. Marketing the eLearning program

Planning for the Implementation

A well thought out initiative involves planning around key areas. They include:

- Organizational culture
- Objective setting
- Tactics
- Evaluation methodologies

Is your organization ready for eLearning? Have you taken the time to fully assess whether the culture will embrace this type of learning? Is there support throughout all levels of the organization for eLearning? Are you already a learning culture? What obstacles can be foreseen? Will the physical work environment support this type of learning?

With the organizational culture elements known you can determine program objectives and goals. This will help crystallize what is to be achieved. What are the business drivers; improving efficiency, increasing sales, decreasing expenses, etc. You will look at the business drivers and link the eLearning program to critical business needs. Factor in the potential audience and establish your success criteria.



Plan for the how and what. Which tools will be used? Which deployment strategy will you devise?

How will you know if the eLearning is successful. Figure out how you will determine if the business objectives are met. How did the initiative impact the business? Did cultural issues become a factor? Reevaluate periodically as the results will change over time.



Marketing the eLearning Program

Start with a marketing plan that outlines your target audience and the specific activities to be carried out during pre-launch, launch, and post-launch.

Determine the best method(s) of distributing information about the eLearning program. The objective is to create awareness, inform, instruct, remind, create buy-in, and increase participation.

Marketing ideas include:

- Announcements on the company intranet
- Flyers

- Events (Lunch and Learn, Open House, etc.)
- Posters in the cafeteria, break rooms, and commonly frequented locations
- Presentations
- Newsletters

Create a marketing calendar that lists timelines, activities, and responsibilities for each marketing task to be executed. At that point it is a matter of executing against the marketing plan.

An eLearning program's success relies on the planning and marketing you are willing to do within the organization even prior to designing or developing the course. Creating excitement for the program helps pave the way for subsequent implementations to come.