**PART ONE**

# E-LEARNING

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## Topics to be covered:

1. What is e-learning?
2. The benefits and drawbacks of online learning.
3. Can we learn online?
4. Best practices of online training.
5. Learning vs. Training .
6. E-learning in education vs. corporate sector.
7. The future of e-learning.

## 1- What is e-learning?

e-learning is a computer based educational tool or system that enables you to learn anywhere and at any time. Today e-learning is mostly delivered though the internet, although in the past it was delivered using a blend of computer-based methods like CD-ROM.

- Technology has advanced so much that the geographical gap is bridged with the use of tools that make you feel as if you are inside the classroom. E-learning offers the ability to share material in all kinds of formats such as videos, slideshows, word documents and PDFs.

- Conducting webinars (live online classes) and communicating with professors via chat and message forums is also an option available to users.

- Many of different e-learning systems (known as Learning Management Systems, or LMS for short) and methods, which allow for courses to be delivered.
- With the right tool various processes can be automated such as the marking of tests or the creation of attractive content.
- E-learning provides the learners with the ability to fit learning around their lifestyles, effectively allowing even the busiest person to further a career and gain new qualifications.

- Some of the most important developments in education have happened since the launch of the internet.
- These days learners are well versed in the use of smartphones, text messaging and using the internet so participating in and running an online course has become a simple affair.
- Message boards, social media and various other means of online communication allow learners to keep in touch and discuss course related matters, whilst providing for a sense of community.

- In the fast-paced world of e-learning the available technologies to make a course exciting are always changing, and course content can and should be updated quickly to give students the very latest information.
- This is especially important if the e-learning training is being given to employees in a sector where keeping up-to-date on industry developments is of the utmost importance.
- This is one of the reasons why many businesses are now offering training via e-learning - other reasons includes low costs and the ability for employees to study in their own time and place.

- Overall, traditional learning is expensive, takes a long time and the results can vary. E-learning offers an alternative that is faster, cheaper and better.

**2-The benefits and drawbacks of online learning**

- When it comes to benefits that make the creation and delivery processes easier and hassle-free. Important benefits are outlined below:

**A- No Boundaries, No Restrictions**

- Along with locational restrictions, time is one of the issues that learners and teachers both have to face in learning.
- In the case of face-to-face learning, the location limits attendance to a group of learners who have the ability to participate in the area, and in the case of time, it limits the crowd to those who can attend at a specific time.
- E-learning, on the other hand, facilitates learning without having to organize when and where everyone who is interested in a course can be present.

**B- More Fun**

- Designing a course in a way that makes it interactive and fun through the use of multimedia or the more recently developed methods of gamification enhances not only your participation factor, but also the relative lifetime of the course material in question.

**C- Cost Effective**

- This is directed to both learners and teachers, but there is a good chance that whatever your role you had to pay too much amounts of money at some point to acquire updated versions of textbooks for school or college.
- While textbooks often become old after a certain period of time, the need to constantly acquire new editions is not present in e-learning.

**D- It Just Fits**

- As companies and organizations adopt technologies to improve the efficiency of day-to-day operations, the use of the internet becomes a necessity.
- As multinational corporations expand across the globe, the chances of working with people from other countries increases, and training all those teams together is an issue that e-learning successfully addresses.

## *Concerns that arise with e-learning*

- Even given all the benefits of e-learning, one cannot deny there are some drawbacks. Practical skills are somewhat harder to pick up from online resources.

- For example, although building a wooden table is something you can easily share information about, record videos of and explain, the practical experience is essential. car engineering are examples of skills that require hands-on experience.

### A- Isolation

- although e-learning offers ease, flexibility and the ability to remotely access a classroom in the student's own time, learners may feel a sense of isolation.

- This is because learning online is an individual act for the most part, which may give the learner the feeling that they are acting completely alone.

- As technology progresses and e-learning benefits from the advancements being made, learners can now engage more actively with professors or other students using tools such as video conferencing, social media, and discussion forums amongst others.

**B- Health Related Concerns**

- E-learning requires the use of a computer and other such devices; this means that eyestrain(fatigue of the eyes, such as that caused by reading or looking at a computer screen for too long.), bad posture(a position of a person's body when standing or sitting) and other physical problems may affect the learner.

- When running an online course it's a good practice to send out guidelines about correct sitting posture, desk height, and recommendations for regular breaks.

# 3- Can we learn online?

- One of the most longstanding discussions in the field of education has been whether or not we can benefit from e-learning to actually learn. Do we, as human beings, have the ability to soak up information in this fashion, and can we truly learn new skills and expand our knowledge by learning virtually?

- We realize the reservations of people who will discuss that computers promote postponement , however we illustrate deeper and see the other side of the coin that defines the unique advantages of learning online.

## Learning online in practice!

- Universities already embrace the power of e-learning to deliver content to students all over the world, even for free. At a time in which universities are under great pressure to deliver education, combining technology with education is integral to coming up with a final product that will empower the educational institution, set it apart, and allow it to grow its student base worldwide.
- Harvard and MIT are just two of the most well-known universities that have launched programs focused on offering classes online for free. Harvard videotapes its lectures and puts them online, so even its own student body can view and review them in case they missed a lecture or need to review a section.

- *Coursera* is a hub for universities that choose to offer online classes through its platform for free. Already, companies and corporations spanning the globe accept certificates of completion of classes offered in *Coursera* as valid credits, as if they had been completed at the university of origin.
- The material is essentially the same, the difference is the medium. Harvard for example, takes the delivery of online courses very seriously, delivering live classes which are recorded and delivered online.

## 4- Best practices of online training

- Online learning can offer a wide range of benefits. However, the knowledge that a student is able to acquire this way depends not only on the course material that is offered, but also the practices used to provide them with this information.

- Here are just a few of the best practices of online training which help to better facilitate the e-learning process:

## A supportive community

- Teachers and e-learning establishments should encourage a strong sense of community amongst their online students. This will enable students to interact with one another and the instructors, as well as with the resources provided, making for an enhanced educational experience!

## Clear expectations

- Students should be aware of what they will be receiving from the virtual class instruction, and both parties should know the preferred method of communication and delivery of the core curriculum.
- For example, a teacher may prefer to email assignments to students, while another might choose to deliver it via the e-learning site instead. Also, it's best to have clear expectations about how long each item of coursework should take to complete.

**4- Asynchronous and synchronous activities**

- It's important to incorporate activities that are more interactive, as well as those that require the student to brainstorm and research a topic in depth. Thanks to the internet students can now attend virtual live courses as well as complete coursework offline that can enable them to delve into a specific subject or skill set.

**Effective usage of available resources**

- To get the most out of the e-learning experience both the teacher and the student should take full advantage of the vast amount of resources that are available online.
- There are literally hundreds of online services that offer access to information, with Wikipedia being a prominent example.
- Instructors should seize the opportunity to enhance their content with online material or redirect students to additional web resources.

## 5- Learning vs. Training

- It's important to understand the difference between learning and training. Of course they are inextricably linked, but they are unique aspects of any educational process.
- Training is the giving of information and knowledge, through speech, the written word or other methods of demonstration in a manner that instructs the trainee.

- Learning is the process of absorbing that information in order to increase skills and abilities and make use of it under a variety of contexts.
- Whatever the goals, the quality of the learning will rely largely on the quality of the training, and so the role of trainer is very important as it can have a huge effect on the outcome of a course for the learner.

# The characteristics of learning

- learning is the process of absorbing information and retaining it with the goal of increasing skills and abilities in order to achieve goals - but it's more than that.
- Learning is what we go through when we want to be equipped for non-specific and unexpected situations and the two are not mutually exclusive.
- While you do learn to do something specific, you are also inadvertently equipped with the knowledge and/or skills to face future challenges.
- In essence, learning is all about equipping a person to tackle not just today's issues, but preparing him/her to creatively come up with ways to tackle tomorrow's issues.

# The characteristics of training

- Training on the other hand focuses more on the development of new skills or skill sets that will be used. Training is the process each new employee goes through when joining a company to learn how to carry out the day-to-day operations, know how their department works and how job-specific tools operate in order to carry out their responsibilities.
- In essence, through training, we are not looking to reshape the behavior of an individual rather the point is to teach the employee or learner how things are done so that they can then carry out a process on their own.

- Ideally, an e-learning environment will utilize both learning and training principles throughout its curriculum.

- This allows instructors/trainers to provide their learners with the tools to tackle current issues, develop life-long skills, improve on their problem-solving skills and utilize resources to the best of their ability.

## 6- E-learning in education vs. corporate sector

- E-learning allows both students and business executives to learn anywhere and at any time. You can learn from virtually any place with a computer or mobile device and internet connection, meaning you can study from home, on vacation or in your break. But e-learning is more than about convenience and there are fundamental differences between e-learning in the corporate sector and in education.

## What happens in the corporate environment?

- The role of corporate training is to ensure an employee has the knowledge and skills to undertake a specific operation to enable an organization to continue to operate.
- Fundamentally, corporate training is centered on knowledge transfer. For example, conferences and workshops are an essential yet expensive part of business and e-learning makes it affordable and efficient - sales people, for instance, can receive their training on new products and sales strategies online. E-learning can be translated to lower costs to deliver training in a shorter period of time, especially when employees are spread worldwide.
- Corporate education however adds another dimension and depth to training by involving learners as participants in generating new knowledge that assists an organization to develop and evolve.

The main characteristics of corporate learning are:

- **Fast-paced:** Enterprise learning is mostly "fast paced" because "time is money" in the corporate world. Training needs to be delivered in as short a time frame as possible with maximum results.
- **Career-related:** Enterprise learning helps employees gain new skills to advance their careers inside the company. Enterprise LMSs have additional modules to facilitate that process.
- **Benefits organization:** Enterprise learning focuses mainly on pragmatic issues with immediate benefits for the organization rather than just individual benefit. Ultimately training is required for the organization to function correctly, and corporate education in order for it to evolve and develop.

- **Training vs. Education:** Enterprise is mostly focused on training, while education is mostly about learning though "igniting curiosity" (check out this related post on 'Learning through Curiosity'). Training usually means the act of being prepared for something, of being taught or learning a particular skill and practicing it until the required standard is reached. This has obvious practical implications for the workplace.

- **Return on investment:** An enterprise needs to be able to calculate the ROI of its learning investment. In an educational context this ROI is difficult to calculate and usually the effects of learning take years to show.

## What happens in educational institutes?

- In comparison with corporate learning, learning in the education sector focuses primarily on knowledge transfer and not on training i.e. in education we mainly strive to learn things with global scope (e.g. a subject such as mathematics) whilst corporate e-learning is more focused on business needs (e.g. new recruit induction).

- The word education means to gain general theoretical knowledge and this may or may not involve learning how to do any specific practical work, tasks or skills.

- Please note that there is some overlap and that the word 'education' can also refer to a process of training or receiving tuition. For example, basic training in a field such as health services is usually a combination of theoretical, educational and practical learning skills.

## Convergence

- Corporate e-learning professionals can learn from academic e-learning initiatives and vice versa, and we are currently seeing a convergence of academic and corporate e-learning needs. For example, the academic space is starting to gravitate towards incorporating corporate methods in the classroom on how certain topics are taught.
- And on the corporate side they're shifting the model of utilizing technologies in a way that supports the traditional classroom of academics especially with regards to blending technologies.

- There is obvious overlap: mobile learning for example is becoming increasingly popular with learners having one if not more mobile devices in their possession and taking these devices to school or work.
- Learners have access to the internet and social networks via these mobile devices so all the technologies required to gather information, create content and communicate with other people are readily available and naturally create an environment conducive to learning.
- Currently both the education and corporate sectors are struggling to answer the exact same questions: how do we use these for learning? How do instructional design, and teaching methodologies and theories apply to delivering content via mobile devices? It's only natural for knowledge to be shared across the table.

## 7- The future of e-learning

- E-learning is here to stay. As computer ownership grows across the globe e-learning becomes increasingly viable and accessible. Internet connection speeds are increasing, and with that, opportunities for more multimedia training methods arise.
- With the immense improvement of mobile networks in the past few years and the increase in telecommuting, taking all the awesome features of e-learning on the road is a reality with smartphones and other portable devices.
- Technologies such as social media are also transforming education constantly.

- Generally speaking, learning is expensive, takes a long time and the results can vary.
- E-learning has been trying for years now to complement the way we learn to make it more effective and measurable.
- The result now being that there are a number of tools that help create interactive courses, standardize the learning process and/or inject informal elements to otherwise formal learning processes.

- Several e-learning trends give us a view to how e-learning and learning tools will be shaped in the future:

## Micro-learning

- **Micro-learning** focuses on the design of micro-learning activities through micro-steps in digital media environments, which already is a daily reality for today's knowledge workers. These activities can be incorporated into a learner's daily routines.
- Unlike "traditional" e-learning approaches, micro-learning often tends towards push technology through push media, which reduces the cognitive load on the learners.
- Therefore, the selection of micro-learning objects and also pace and timing of micro-learning activities are of importance for didactical designs. Micro-learning is an important paradigm shift that avoids the need to have separate learning sessions since the learning process is embedded in the daily routine of the end-user.
- It is also perfectly suited for mobile devices where long courses can be overkill.

# Gamification

- **Gamification** is the use of game thinking and game mechanics in a non-game context to engage users and solve problems.

# Personalized Learning

- **Personalized Learning** is the tailoring of pedagogy, curriculum and learning environments to meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners.
- Personalization is broader than just individualization or differentiation in that it affords the learner a degree of choice about what is learned, when it is learned and how it is learned.
- This may not indicate unlimited choice since learners will still have targets to be met. However, it may provide learners the opportunity to learn in ways that suit their individual learning styles and multiple intelligences.

End of part one