



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### E-Mythical Monsters

The advent of e-learning has brought about many learning solutions. However, the e-learning industry is currently facing its share of trouble. Economic hardships have forced organizations to reduce the quality of e-learning programs. This adverse climate naturally acts as a breeding ground for numerous e-learning myths, further compounding the woes of the industry.

When an organization provides e-learning, the infrastructure, culture, management and support processes will have to adapt. Organizations often stumble at this step. The trouble is, managers believe that e-learning is just another alternative training medium.

Providing e-learning services involves full-time integrated real-time data flow and learner support, personalization, learner empowerment, concern for privacy and security, automated fund flows, etc. A lack of e-business knowledge fuels the spread of e-learning myths at an infectious pace.

The following is a look at the recent myths being heard in different organizations that have altered their assumptions and beliefs about e-learning.

**Myth: E-asy!** Most e-learning programs are implemented without any deliberation since clients assume they are paying for simplicity. Besides making the complex simple, challenging versions of e-learning can make the complex clear. Unfortunately, many organizations prefer to implement simpler versions rather than challenging ones.

**Myth: The success of training lies in meeting objectives.** The 'training by objective' methodology is popular in most organizations. This is based on the assumption that once the objectives are set, taught, and tested, the individual will be ready to perform. This is not necessarily true

**Myth: Volume = Value.** When management asks, "How much will it cost to produce a one hour e-learning program?" and the supplier replies, "We currently charge \$10,000, per hour of e-learning, with reductions for volume," it's a dangerous situation. Rather than measuring the degree to which the e-learning meets the training objective, the value is being equated with the volume of content.

A supplier will argue that if he/she spends more time analyzing and designing a project, he/she can meet the training needs in half an hour instead of an hour. However, he/she would expect to be paid for the extra time and effort. Hence, he/she would still charge for an hour. Of course, trainees would still benefit because they will spend less time away from work and experience more focused learning. In such a situation, the organization pays for the value and service provided, not the volume.

**Myth: Content production.** Organizations often approach vendors with the question, "How much will it cost to turn this content into e-learning?" e-Learning is a tool that can improve business performance, but organizations call its creators content producers and



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scriptwriters. e-Learning vendors would rather be known as learning designers and instructional designers.

**Myth: If you build it, they will go through it.** The only person who goes through the entire content is the content producer. When organizations view e-learning programs as being content-centered, they expect the vendor to cram it with as much information as possible. There is no guarantee that in long, cumbersome courses, a learner will go through, understand and apply all the content available. Moreover, since all content isn't equal, a learner might not understand a concept despite multiple visits.

The usability approach identifies training content, assesses its importance and adds relevant reference material. This makes the content superior in terms of use.

**Myth: One time quick fix.** These e-learning mantras are sure to backfire - "If you build it they will come" and "if you build it, the problem will get solved." e-Learning isn't meant to be used only once! Training departments that merely flirt with e-learning fail to realize that they will squander millions of dollars unless they set their e-learning strategies right.

**Myth: Course replacement.** e-Learning is a technology intervention that improves individual performance. This broad spectrum accommodates knowledge management, performance support systems, simulation training, intranets and electronic courses.

Sadly, though, most organizations still view e-learning solutions as electronic books that replace courses. e-Learning is much more than just online training that is similar to classroom training.

**Myth: Technological advancements/standards/theories will make it better.** Training departments believe that e-learning is failing to live up to expectations because of poor technology and organizations' inability to understand its standards and theories.

Producing quality training is difficult, but not at the delivery level. It is difficult to understand learners, the context of learning, and how and what is to be taught. This effort would have to be made regardless of technology, standards and theories.

**Myth: Vendors cater to a client's e-learning needs.** Training departments assume that, having approached a vendor for training content, they can absolve their responsibility. With virtually no involvement from the training department and scanty budgets, it is difficult for e-learning solutions to be meaningful. e-Learning projects should be viewed as partnerships.

These myths don't capture the entire mythical spectrum, but they should set the training department thinking about their assumptions and beliefs. e-Learning practices affect the productivity of an organization and therefore deserve more than just a thought!