



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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A Potent Portal of Education

The benefits of using a portal to support on-demand education

The concept of 'on-demand' is gaining great popularity. Leading organizations are leveraging technology, processes and strategies that make information and services available to their employees and customers around the clock, around the globe. However, the practice of on-demand education (an offshoot of the 'on-demand' concept) has not found much buy-in yet.

Going instant

Few organizations provide their employees with on-demand corporate learning programs. Their argument is that employees are either eager or willing or both to take time out of their work schedules (at times even their personal time) to enroll in learning initiatives that enhance job performance.

Confining learning to classrooms or time schedules robs it of its true value. By providing learning embedded in work activities and integrating it into day-to-day jobs, organizations can dramatically increase their life span even during cutthroat competition.

Leveraging the knowledge, expertise and experience that employees require to perform their jobs well and making it readily available 24 / 7 widens and improves the reach and scope of learning initiatives. Equally important is the need to ensure that all learning content is available to the employee on a single platform.

The education mall

The use of a portal such as an intranet ensures that learning is available at a central location. An employee can then locate needed information easily and quickly. Training experts compare on-demand education to the 24-hour news channels.

Futuristic plans

On-demand learning moves beyond classrooms or single event experiences to provide an employee learning embedded in his daily workflow. Employees can access the intranet to enroll in online courses and chats, thus collaborating with globally dispersed colleagues to resolve problems.

Besides enhancing learner experience, on-demand learning ensures that employees can respond to the demands of a highly competitive and fast-paced corporate environment. For instance, a client may ask questions about an unfamiliar subject that the employee has to answer immediately. If the employee has easy and quick access to the information, tools and resources needed to answer the customer query, he or she can serve his / her customer better. Additionally, such access enhances an employee's capabilities to meet ever-changing job demands.

Portal impact



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Organizations can design portals to provide their employees centrally located interfaces categorized according to their job roles. Such an interface would allow the employee easy and quick access to applications, content, processes and people anytime. Most organizations have been using the intranet to communicate policies, directories or corporate news. They can now use it as a portal to transfer learning material.

The primary objective of using a portal is to unify organization-wide knowledge, culture, business processes and people. A portal helps create a global workforce where employees can access and interact with various processes and people anytime.

Global reach

With the MNC culture growing, organizations can use portals to unify employees working in different environments. For instance, one employee might have access to high-speed Internet connectivity. Another employee working in a far-flung unit might have little network access that makes it difficult to interact with peers. The use of a portal supports the learning needs of both employees by providing them access to learning information whenever demanded and levels the field.

Technology interventions

A portal can provide a wide-range of functions that include application integration, content searching, content delivery, customization, collaboration, tracking, reporting and personalization. A learning portal provides organizations with the following benefits:

- The capability to respond to customer queries or demands immediately
- A reduction in course delivery and travel costs
- An improvement in operational efficiency

Employee benefits include:

- Easy and quick access to information
- Freedom to learn at one's own pace and style
- Learning content aligned with job responsibilities
- Interaction with colleagues and experts via e-mail, message boards or chat rooms
- Learning programs that are a seamless aspect of the workday

The switch

Once organizations decide to change to an on-demand learning model, they can expect the following changes:

Innovative governance. Dynamic and creative governance and management allows optimum utilization of learning, making sure that it delivers ROI. Such innovative governance can take the form of a decentralized business unit or a centralized learning organization.



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Technology. As one of the first steps in preparing for a portal enabled with an on-demand learning program, organizations must conduct a requirements analysis. This will help determine whether their existing system can accommodate integration of learning material. Most organizations have intranets that can be used to deliver learning material such as web-based lectures, reading material, progress reports and chat rooms. However, to create learning communities the organization must invest in training technologies such as virtual classrooms, content management and collaboration tools, learning management systems and learning content management systems.

Alignment. To ensure the success of learning programs, it is vital to align an individual's job roles with the organization's business priorities. When learning is embedded in the daily workflow and has a direct bearing on job performance, an employee is more motivated and involved. Additionally, the alignment of learning programs with business priorities ensures a laser focus on overall organizational growth and innovation.

A culture of learning. The transition to an on-demand learning model requires redefining the role of learning. Organizations will have to reinvent their thinking on learning and ensure that the organizational culture fosters this new model, which includes anytime access to information or subject matter experts (SMEs) and provides learners the freedom to shape their own learning.

In practice

The modern workforce needs to be highly responsive and proactive. On-demand education prepares employees to be just that.