

## Embedded e-Learning

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What is the status of e-learning within your organisation? Is e-learning used distinctly from other forms of training or is it embedded within the mainstream learning activity? Is e-learning used as standard to support classroom and other learning programmes? Who is responsible for e-learning? Do you have an e-learning group, or is it managed by the mainstream learning & development (L&D) people? In short, how embedded is e-learning within your organisation?

These are a series of questions our analysts have been asking many organisations, and the answers are very interesting. Although many organisations are now very mature in their use of e-learning, it is still surprising how limited the penetration of e-learning is in many mainstream L&D functions. A snapshot across many of the FTSE100 for example, indicates that whilst use of e-learning is well established in most of them, that usage is dominated by small pockets of the overall curriculum and learning activity, but often those pockets are quite deep in terms of exposure to the organisation. E-learning will generally be available on a much broader basis, but typically overall patterns of usage are concentrated around a limited number of specific programmes (in which e-learning forms a dominant part).

Analysis of organisational responsibilities typically reinforces this bias towards broad availability but deep and narrow usage. E-learning curriculum (especially generic 3<sup>rd</sup> party content) is typically managed centrally. It may provide a broad strata of learning material across an organisation, but is typically not truly embedded in the mainstream learning programmes. Specific learning needs/programmes will drive high usage in narrow pockets, but broad usage tends to be limited. Normally 5-10% of a broad e-learning catalogue will drive most (maybe 90%+) of the usage of e-learning. Analysis of overall L&D budgets will also normally confirm that, although these pockets of e-learning usage are important, they are not the big spend / big management focus areas.

Most organisations have now moved away from dedicated e-learning groups with significant resources, transferring the responsibilities for adoption of e-learning into the broader L&D organisation. But have they effectively transferred the understanding and capabilities to effectively use e-learning as well, I would say not! My view is that L&D is a very conservative function, largely wedded to historic preferences, relationships and capabilities. Mainstream L&D chooses what it considers known and safe solutions, which still translates as meaning classroom training, workshops and maybe now coaching. E-learning is not considered known and safe (especially the latter), but sometimes may present itself as the only viable solution. That is what still tends to drive its adoption today.

I sometimes talk about the 'learning complacency' gap between the impact of L&D on the business today, versus the impact needed to ensure the business really achieves its goals. My view is that in most organisations the learning complacency gap is large and growing bigger. Driven by increasing change, knowledge, and complexity, and by reducing time and increasing risks of non-competence or non-compliance, the needs of the business are advancing much faster than the ability of L&D to evolve to meet them. This is not new, it has been happening for some time, but is now more obvious.

Addressing the learning complacency gap needs a radical shift in thinking and capability for learning. This includes greater realisation and commitment on behalf of the business, and a radical realignment of approach and capabilities for L&D. The embedded adoption of learning technology is one part of that realignment.

This means more than just increasing usage of e-learning. There will always be some deep pockets where e-learning is an obvious answer, but it is really about reengineering the mainstream understanding and approaches to learning too. Most learning programmes should have e-elements and e-options, not just a few. And those e-elements need to be properly embedded, properly blended, with the other elements, not just standalone disconnected components. The mainstream L&D organisation needs to

truly be e-comfortable as well as e-capable; much more so than they are today. Only then will get to a point where we cease to think about e-learning is different and think about it as just learning. Lots of people may make statements like that today (often to reinforce their vested interests), but the reality is different.

For further information on the eLearnity research, please contact me at [davidw@elearnity.com](mailto:davidw@elearnity.com).

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