6 Strategies for Digital Education using Laptop & Co

Less is often more: how mixed media advances learning

More and more companies are experimenting with the digitization of their training programmes for employees. Compared to traditional seminars, online courses save time and money. But the shift from the seminar room to the "digital classroom" does not always progress smoothly. Above all, many employees are progressively getting used to the new form of learning. Our expert Yveline Luterbacher describes 6 success strategies companies use to effectively convert their continuing education to digital learning.

The austerity measures did not stop at the training. Where to cut cost? The Telecommunications company decided to reduce attendance at seminars. Instead of the class room, employees should learn on the computer. This saves travel expenses and reduces absenteeism. Some courses should even be "digital": with webinars, online tutorials and virtual learning groups. Yet what seemed so modern and contemporary faced resistance. Many employees had problems with digital learning –sitting alone in front of the screen. The company responded quickly, providing its staff with contacts and learning guides to answer questions and encourage them to keep going. It seemed that doing vocational training on your own in the "digital classroom" did not work.

Computer instead of class room - the digital learning world has arrived in vocational education. More and more companies are deciding to train their employees on a computer, tablet or smartphone. On the one hand, this is "state of the art". On the other hand, learning is independent of dates and places - ultimately more favourable for everyone involved. But for many employees, this digital learning is unfamiliar. "It is completely different to learn on your own in front of a screen than in the class room," explains Yveline Luterbacher, a specialist in digital learning at the consulting firm next level consulting. Many digital learning approaches lack the direct interaction of the learners with each other and the trainer, which is crucial for learning success.

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In addition: Many companies build their online courses as 1: 1 copies of their class room courses. This rarely works. "Learning objectives, the content and the didactic strategy should be adapted to the digital media", says Yveline Luterbacher. She recommends developing a special learning process for digital courses. Ideal is a mix of digital media formats and classic seminars. For example, educational videos with interactive exercises for knowledge transfer are combined with in-depth training, group work, and case study exercises. The expert describes 6 key factors with which companies succeed in their journey into the digital learning world.

1. Select the right strategy

Make or buy? This question is faced by many companies that want to convert their training to digital learning. Some use the "do-it-yourself" process and create a digital university themselves, while others have their electronic classrooms set up by specialized service providers. Collaboration with service providers saves time and opens up the opportunity for quality teaching. But the all-round service costs money, but professionals know that home-made creations can also be expensive and very time consuming. "It is not just about a technical implementation, but also about a technical and didactic design, for which experts are needed," explains Yveline Luterbacher. In addition, costs for programmers, speakers, designers, photographers, teachers or graphic artists add up. Decisive for Yveline Luterbacher is the backing of the management - also with regard to the budget. "Management needs to know that digital education is an investment," she says.

2. Master the cultural change

Digital learning means cultural change. The change from textbook and class room to the digital learning world is difficult for many employees. The age of employees hardly matters. "Even many younger employees are unaware of digital learning," Yveline Luterbacher observed, "they cannot cope with the disciplined, location-independent study in front of the

screen." Professionals therefore recommend planning the transition carefully, preparing employees for the new learning,

and also giving them time. Some companies introduce their employees to the new learning in workshops. Practical tip: Companies should open their courses to all employees, not just special target groups. This openness for all has already converted many employees to their company's "digital university".

3. Consider the wishes of the learners

Employees should be allowed to participate in the design of digital learning opportunities. For example, professionals recommend asking employees about the technology they prefer. Are learning programmes for smartphones or tablets desirable? Are teaching materials accepted as a PDF file? Are employees ready to participate in digital learning groups? How important are the classic classroom seminars for you? "Companies do well when they consider wishes for learning time and quiet learning places" recommends Yveline Luterbacher. For example, employees need a suitable learning environment. Nobody, for example, can get into a new risk analysis methodology when phones ring and colleagues distract them." At least you need a quiet corner in the open-plan office, better still a separate room for the apprentices," says the specialist.

4. Develop a sustainable "learning path"

Vocational learning is a long process: Employees acquire new knowledge in online courses. Afterwards, they use this knowledge in workshops for the first time and test it practically. Then they apply their new skills in their everyday working life. Determining in all of this is the didactically clever mix, for example, of online training, presence seminars in the group, virtual coaching or online group work. "The clever mix of digital and analogue formats makes it possible to achieve enormous effectiveness and sustainability today," explains Yveline Luterbacher. These comprehensive, interlinked learning paths ensure that continuing education has a lasting effect and ultimately pays off for the company.

5. Use learning companions

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Digital learning also needs support. It does not work by itself. Many companies provide their employees with professional learning guides. They not only answer organizational and technical questions, but also motivate and empower the learners. "Learning has a lot to do with psychology," says Yveline Luterbacher, "Interpersonal contact is essential for motivation, which plays a crucial role in anchoring new knowledge." This also includes the opportunity for employees to learn from each other.

6. Use moderation

Digital media is full of effects. Animations, feature films, 3-D or complex simulations can bring online courses to life and inspire learners. Nevertheless, professionals warn against overdoing it with these effects – and not just because of the costs involved. Often, the effects are little more than games that distract from the teaching content. Professionals carefully plan for which situations, topics and learning objectives they use which digital learning formats. Is only information conveyed - or should employees apply their new knowledge intensively after the course? Is knowledge only needed for a short time - or does it have to be deeply anchored in the long term? In general: The digital learning offers should be technically simple, so that they can be modified later. Professionals point out that the learning content is changing rapidly, especially in volatile sectors. "You should keep your options open to technically and organisationally update and supplement content quickly, and to respond to the feedback of your employees," recommends Yveline Luterbacher.

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