

# Successful e-Learning Initiatives

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## Developing an eLearning Strategy

You can often introduce a single eLearning course in an organization quickly and easily. Adding a second course is almost as painless. However, when you prepare to add the third course, it becomes apparent you need a plan. You suddenly find yourself confronting issues you never imagined.

Developing and documenting an overall strategy supports the successful implementation of eLearning within an organization. Be sure to consider strategic and operational and/or tactical issues when developing an eLearning strategy.

### Strategic Considerations

Listed below are some strategic considerations to keep in mind when developing your strategy. Expand this list to meet your unique situation.

- Global training initiatives
- Measurement, evaluation, and certification requirements
- Mission and vision for eLearning opportunities
- Strategic business initiatives and how eLearning supports them

### Operational/Tactical Considerations

Operational/tactical considerations can be divided into three categories; content, people, and technology. Be sure to consider the implications of introducing eLearning to an organization. There may be resistance in any number of areas, learners who fear the loss of a social interaction with their peers, instructors who fear the loss or marginalization of their job, and line managers who resent the imposition of on-the-job learning. Change management and communication are critical to success. After reviewing the list below, adapt it to meet the needs of your organization.

- Content
  - Size and scope of training programs
  - Types of content (technical, soft skills, custom, off-the-shelf)
  - Audience reactions, feedback, and effectiveness of training
  - Terminology, definitions, and common language
- People
  - Audience profile, size, needs, perceptions of training
  - Change management plans
  - Communication plans
  - Global & corporate cultural implications including language
  - Internal design/development skills & capabilities
  - Physical diversity issues (Section 508)
  - Resource implications & utilization

- Timelines and time frames for future operational plans
- Technologies, Tools, and Systems
  - Costs associated with startup & maintenance of systems and tools
  - Design, development, delivery systems and tools
  - Future system enhancements & infrastructure requirements
  - Legal issues & implications (proprietary data, security, etc)
  - Processes used to establish & maintain systems and tools
  - Technical environment & infrastructure as it relates to design, development, delivery of training materials
  - Timelines and time frames for future technology plans

## **Design and Delivery of eLearning**

To successfully design, develop, and deploy eLearning deliverables, you must employ a flexible, proven methodology. ThinkWorks' approach incorporates lessons learned from a wide variety of projects. We recommend approaching the development of eLearning deliverables in the following manner:

### **Bite Size Learning**

Develop eLearning courses that consist of several short lessons or topics, rather than one large program with hours of content. This allows learners to begin and end a training session in a reasonable time frame. Approximately 15 minutes per lesson is recommended to meet adult learner's needs.

Developing several lessons also provides the opportunity to deliver the training as the lessons become available. This allows learners to begin accessing the training sooner than if they are waiting for a large course to become available. Another benefit of this approach is the ease of performing updates to training material. Only the lessons with changes or additions must be modified.

### **One Step-at-a-Time**

Develop the deliverables using two phases. Dividing the project into two phases allows the content to be precisely defined, and the total cost to be accurately estimated.

In Phase I, the topics are validated with Subject Matter Experts. This ensures the content is valid prior to beginning development. A Design Document is created which describes each major topic, its sub-topics, and the appropriate instructional methodologies for each topic. The Design Document details what to teach and how it will be taught. It also includes the overall theme and course design. After completing the Design Document, adjustments to the time & cost estimate can be made for the development of the content.

In Phase II, the course content is developed and programmed. A script and program-ready materials can be generated from the Design Document created in Phase I. As lessons are developed, the courseware can be made available to learners.

### **Plan for Success**

Develop a communication and marketing plan to ensure learners are aware of the new training, its purpose, and how it relates to them. A communication plan which dovetails

with the training topics raises awareness of the training and begins the process of motivating learners to use the training.

The communication plan should focus on building an inquisitive awareness of eLearning across the organization. One strategy is to first pique people's curiosity and then lead them to discovery. The goal is to inform and motivate learners.

### **Success Requirements**

The list below describes what is required for the successful completion of any eLearning project. Be sure to expand this list with your organization's additional requirements.

- A clear strategy/plan that documents goals, objectives, and outcomes
- A project plan that documents the tasks, resources, and timelines
- A single focal point (on the client team) to provide overall guidance and direction
- Subject Matter Experts available to provide content and clarify information through face-to-face meetings, telephone interviews, and email
- A decision making process and decision maker(s) clearly identified
- A review cycle and approval process clearly identified and executed in a timely manner