

E-LEARNING AS A TOOL FOR KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper has illustrated how e-Learning techniques and technology can be used to enhance knowledge management in an enterprise and provide the benefits of both.

To implement e-learning, each organization must assess its readiness to the following requirements: infrastructure, knowledge editor, organizational culture, employee attitude, computer usage and technology requirements.

The challenges of implementing e-learning are reflected in the challenges of implementing knowledge management and include the development of technical infrastructure, improvements in organizational behavior, knowledge of design strategies and economic investments.

Keywords: e-learning, knowledge management, knowledge sharing,

1. E-LEARNING VS. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

1.1. E-learning

The historical background of e-learning relates to development of computer-based training and education and goes back to the seventies of the last century. E-learning is a support system in expanding knowledge providing a structured educational content. E-learning pertains today to learning delivered or enabled by electronic technology (like Internet, television, videotapes and computer-based training). In principle, e-learning is some kind of distance learning. This concept becomes more efficient and faster with the emergence of Internet. The learning materials are available through Internet, and participants (learners and tutors) are communicating between themselves by e-mail, chat, discussion forums or social networks, and thus the concept might be used either as main learning method or as combined approach to classroom-based training.

The advantages of that concept are reflected in the flexibility and it is easy to implement the essential parts of learning, such as:

- economy and efficiencies (time and money saving);
- motivated role due to its flexibility and adaptability to a particular person circumstances;
- flexibility regarding the learning place, time, speed and style;
- possibility of access to experts for various topics, asking questions and obtaining adequate information and support;
- e-learning covers a complete teaching -learning circle.

Along with defining e-learning, various terms appear in the literature and professional papers:

- WBT (Web Based Training) and "Online Learning" having identical meaning and provide the latest knowledge by means of network;

- CBT (Computer Based Training) knowledge are provided completely through computers not connected to network.
- TBT (Technology Based Training) has a broader meaning and relates to classroom-based training improved by media (computers, TV, audio, video etc). An example of TBT is video conference.

1.2. Knowledge Management

This approach has appeared in professional papers and scientific conferences in the middle of the nineties of the last century. Unlike e-learning, Knowledge Management has developed in a business context. Fast changes in modern enterprises have contributed to the popularization of this concept. The development of information but also other technologies has generated communication possibilities without any presentiment and dissemination of knowledge by incredible speed. This includes acquiring, retaining, storing, distribution and using of knowledge in an organization and a full range of processes are dealing with it by which the organization distributes knowledge. When attempting to define knowledge the fact that a human mind is capable for two kinds of knowledge being rational and intuitive might be helpful. No universal definition of Knowledge Management exists. In the broadest sense it can be defined as a continuous disclosure of what the organization knows, or intellectual property of organization and knowledge-based property.

Several definitions might be emphasized in that context:

- Knowledge Management is the formalization and approach to experience, knowledge and expertise opening new possibilities, enabling superior performances, inciting innovations and increasing the value for user (Beckman, 1997).
- Knowledge Management is getting the right knowledge to the right people at the right time so they can make the best decisions (Petrash, 1996).
- Knowledge Management is the he process of capturing a company's collective expertise wherever it resides—in databases, on paper, or in people's heads—and distributing it to wherever it can help produce the biggest payoff (Hibbard, 1997).

1.3. What is the difference between these two concepts

First of all, in order to emphasize the difference between e-learning and Knowledge Management it should be pointed out that there are different purposes of these two concepts, and consequently also different approach to different topics. The second essential difference between these two concepts is in a function of time. Unlike e-learning being relatively static, Knowledge Management is a dynamic process where conversation and exchange of knowledge unfold in real time.

1.4. What is common for these two concepts

These both concepts draw the same roots, i.e. they are dealing with knowledge and aiming at improvement of assignments, ability to make effective decisions and positive impact on business environment. Knowledge Management and e-learning are different sides of the same coin – long life learning. For both concepts of paramount importance is ensuring coordination and cooperation. Both systems are using client-server system architecture, also both are attaching great importance to personalization whether to support role-based and person-oriented personalization.

Though these two concepts are bringing knowledge in different ways, both are offering specific information to the final user.

2. CONCLUSION

A frequent topic of discussion recently is integration of e-learning and Knowledge Management. Some researches conducted in the Knowledge Management area show that approximately 42% of knowledge is in human heads, 26% in paper documents, 20% in electronic documents and 12% in electronic databases. It clearly shows that Knowledge Management is the right way of human resources management enabling retrieval, release and use of knowledge. The advantages of these two concepts should be brought in interaction. Knowledge Management should be interpolated into e-learning in a way that the learning course content would be continuously fresh and adapted to targeted groups. E-learning should be integrated in the Knowledge Management environment as to ensure simple mechanisms for organization of information. The e-learning concept has not been exclusively

designed to teach the user, but it ensures information in sorted and structured context, and this is exactly what Knowledge Management is lacking of.

3. REFERENCES

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