

An Overview of e-Learning Barriers in the Business Environment of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

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Abstract

E-Learning principles and technologies have already been implemented by various types of enterprises for several years. Successful stories of its utilization in the business environment are mostly described in the literature. However, this “optimistic” approach usually highlights positive points of e-Learning implementation and disables to fully and explicitly define related bottlenecks or pitfalls. This position paper provides literature overview of conditions and barriers to successful e-Learning implementation in the business settings of small and medium-sized enterprises. The investigation of published case studies reveals that there are several barriers, which need to be taken into the consideration to support fruitful usage of e-Learning technologies in the workplace. Moreover, the paper suggests potential activities that may contribute to overcoming of these barriers. Correct definition of the e-Learning purpose in a given organization, or active communication with all the stakeholders can serve as an example.

Keywords: On-line learning, e-Learning, employee education, employee training, workplace, information and communication technology.

Introduction

Current form of e-Learning and its related issues attracted the attention of specialists several years ago. In the academic circles, the roots can be traced even to the last century (Mikulecký and Mikulecká, 1999). Consequently, e-Learning technologies and principles were more or less successfully introduced in several areas such as tourism (Čech and Bureš, 200) or the business environment (Černá and Poulová, 2008; Mohelská, 2009). Its significance was emphasized by the European Union (EU), which set a goal to make the European Union “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy in the world” by “developing e-Learning for all its citizens” at the Lisbon summit in 2000 (Cedefop, 2001). Alan Clarke (2008) defines e-Learning as “learning through and being supported by the use of information technology”. In the business setting, the importance of sharing information using information technology can be observed in concepts such as Human Resources Management, Knowledge Management, or Organizational Development. All of them formalize access to knowledge and expertise, encourage high performance and innovation and support customer value (Bureš and Čech, 2007). The objective of this paper is to review available papers focusing on implementation of e-Learning in the business environment, to investigate the main conditions of successful e-Learning implementation, to identify main barriers, and to deduce proposals to overcome these barriers.

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Conclusions

Implementation of e-Learning has its important place in business. It is an on-going process. As such, it does not start and end with the actual technical installation and providing the training courses. The outcomes and lessons learned should be constantly used to improve and innovate the whole system for better future use.

At this point, it is hard to say which of the e-Learning barriers is predominant. The correct understanding of the concept of e-Learning is essential and all other processes stem from its definition in a particular organization in the first place. However, each component (conceptual, organizational, technical, and human) influences the others significantly. Further study is needed in this area to find out how exactly these components are interconnected and especially how the human factor impacts success of e-Learning in an organization. Case studies and practical examples of e-Learning implementation may bring more light on these issues.

Acknowledgment

This paper was created with the support of the ESF project INDOP – Innovation and Support of the Doctoral Study Program, identification number CZ.1.07/2.2.00/28.0327.

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