Building Blocks for a Successful eTraining Program: Part 1, the Plan

There’s no single right way to build an eTraining or eLearning program. But there are some important building blocks to ensure your program is a success.

As organizations adapt to new norms such as hybrid working environments, technology evolves, and focus on learning experiences grow, it’s increasingly important to build your eTraining or eLearning program with forethought and careful planning. While successful programs vary greatly, they all share some common elements—key building blocks—that make them successful. First and foremost is a solid plan, which will sharpen your focus and provide a solid foundation on which to base decisions.

While all of this may sound complicated, understanding the key building blocks will help simplify the process and strengthen the outcome: a successful eLearning program.

Training solutions range in scope and scale, from single-challenge focus to broad, cross-functional challenges. No matter where your initiative falls on that continuum, planning is step one. Here are some building blocks your plan should address:
Define Your Business Goals

Training will ultimately map back to achieving specific business goals and solving business problems. For example, your ultimate goal may be to increase sales, improve customer service, reduce manufacturing costs due to human error, ensure compliance, or improve employee morale and well-being. One way to gain alignment is to document these in the form of a mission statement for review and approval by key stakeholders.

Develop a Solution

Developing a solution requires defining desired outcomes, specific objectives, amount or scope and necessary content. Consider too that training, regardless of how well designed, is not effective unless employees or learners are properly motivated to take it. Include communications to motivate and engage the trainees in your plan. Note: motivation is also a key element that should be considered in the design of the instructional content.

Develop an Implementation Strategy

An implementation strategy includes two fundamental components: a curriculum based on the identified training needs and an infrastructure and delivery plan. The infrastructure plan includes identifying all training and information delivery methods (such as blended learning) and technology. The implementation strategy will likely be a phased plan requiring evaluation and refinement. Additionally, the plan should identify the implementation team and their responsibilities. Good strategies strive for early measurable success, are flexible and scalable and take into consideration the corporate culture and politics of the situation.
Prepare a Business Case for the Training Program

You’ve identified a training solution to meet your business goal and developed an implementation strategy. Now you need to make sure it’s economically feasible. This translates to quantifying the costs and the benefits of the training. This analysis, both initial and ongoing, will be the fuel that drives your training initiative forward. Things to consider in your business case:

- The initial scope and details of your training program will help you estimate development cost and project schedules but understand it’s subject to change. You may want to dive into your implementation plan sooner rather than later so you can estimate with greater confidence.

- Remember to estimate ongoing costs for new courses, maintenance, updates, and new technology.

- Quantity the benefits—both direct and indirect—of your training program. Sometimes, the benefit is a clear cost savings or gained efficiency. Other times, it is a matter of projecting benefits based on new capabilities. Indirect benefits to consider include things like improved employee morale and wellbeing.

Develop a Set of Metrics

Metrics are measurable performance factors valuable as feedback to evaluate the training results. They can help you refine the implementation strategy and to keep the training initiatives on track. Training solutions need to be constantly evaluated and refined. Make sure that the metrics are closely correlated to the fundamental business goals that are being addressed.
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