Chapter 9

Web-Based Competency and Training Management Systems for Distance Learning

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Abstract

The Web has had a major impact on how corporate training departments manage employee training. The evolution of computers and networks allows companies to implement a precise customer-focused approach. Through the use of competency and training management systems such as the SIGAL system used by Bell Canada, organizational training plans can be efficiently communicated throughout the organization, training needs can be linked to the performance evaluations of individual employees, and online training materials can be conveniently delivered to employees at their desktops. In the future, we predict that training management systems will evolve to incorporate analytic tools that can calculate the return on training investment, evaluate the impact of training on job performance, and determine the impact of training on corporate profits. This chapter discusses the value to companies of using a Web-based system for competency and training management, using the case of Bell Canada as an example of how companies are implementing these tools today.

Introduction

Web-based technologies have created an opportunity for companies to revolutionize the management and delivery of employee training and development. The interest that corporate training departments have in effectively meeting the needs of the end user is nothing new. Trainers have always been committed to delivering high-quality training that has a positive impact on company performance. What is new is the precision with which high-powered computers and high-bandwidth networks allow training departments to implement their customer-focused approach. Through the use of competency and training management systems such as the SIGAL system now being piloted at Bell Canada, organizational training plans can be efficiently communicated throughout the organization, training needs can be linked to the performance evaluations of individual employees, and online training materials can be conveniently delivered to employees at their desktops. This chapter discusses the value to companies of using a Web-based system for competency and training management, using Bell Canada as a case study.

Background

Distance learning has its origins in computer-based training, or CBT. Large companies with a high need for alternative methods of training employees were the first to adopt CBT. IBM, for example, started using CBT to train employees in the late 1960s. Computer technicians, typically working almost exclusively at client sites maintaining IBM mainframe computers, took training related to their jobs using the computers they serviced. The use of distance learning has become more widespread as computers become more powerful, and high-bandwidth networks extend their reach throughout the corporation. Today, many companies are implementing Web-based training that is delivered to desktops, computers in employees' homes, and laptops in any location through corporate intranets, extranets, or the Internet. As the use of distance learning has increased, organizations are realizing there is also a need for online training management systems to provide access to training materials and track their use.

Benefits of Web-Based Training Delivery

Web-based training has several advantages that have encouraged companies such as Bell Canada to explore the possibilities of its use for employee training. Asynchronous courses, comprised of HTML pages and in some cases, multimedia elements such as graphics, animation, video, or recorded audio offer great flexibility in how course materials are both accessed and used. Since asynchronous courses do not have a live instructor, they can be

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