Chapter 6.4
Some Key Success Factors in Web-Based Corporate Training in Brazil:
A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Brazilian companies are increasingly turning to Web-based corporate training by virtue of the fact that they need to train their employees within tight budget constraints in a country of continental dimensions. However, most of these companies do not know what the critical success factors in these endeavors are. Therefore, this article seeks to investigate some key success factors associated with such digital enterprises. In order to achieve this, the multiple case study method is used, whereby two cases, both conducted within the same Brazilian company, leading to opposite outcomes—a success and a failure—are analyzed in depth. The conclusions reached in this article were that goal orientation, source of motivation, and metacognitive support were the three critical dimensions in these two Web-based corporate training programs under analysis. Lastly, some managerial implications of these results are outlined.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, market dynamics are becoming increasingly intense due to new strategic orientations and the pressing need for businesses to adapt themselves to new business models and regulatory frameworks. For this reason, it is of paramount importance for companies to become agile, as well as achieve low costs and high returns on investment associated with their employee training programs. On the other hand, the increasing speed of obsolescence in training content, plus the high costs of face-to-face training programs, as well as the logistic hurdles

linked with their deployment—mainly in firms operating in countries of continental dimensions (like Brazil)—are major barriers to the implementation of such face-to-face training programs.

Another aspect is that information technology (IT) is changing the way people search, locate, access, and retrieve available knowledge, as well as altering the learning process and the way training is conducted (Hodgins, 2000). While employees take charge of their own learning process and professional development, the employers face new challenges in training and retaining teams with in-depth knowledge about their business (Hodgins, 2000).

It is in this context of rapid change, with massive information loads and the search for training programs, that Web-based corporate distance training comes into its own. Information technology can solve most of the problems associated with the hitherto existing employee training undertakings, enabling the implementation of corporate distance training programs (Rosemberg, 2001).

Despite being a key factor for developing feasible training programs, information technology per se is not a guarantee of success for these endeavors. Most of the time, it must be linked to pedagogical and didactical issues related to them. The specific characteristics of each training program must be analyzed in depth and considered as relevant as the implementation costs throughout the decision-making process (Clark, 1983).

The structuring of Web-based training programs is no easy task, as according to several scholars, various critical success factors must be taken into consideration (see, for instance, Carey, Mitchell, Peerenboom, & Lytwyn, 1998; Penuel & Roschelle, 1999). In line with this, this article seeks to investigate what these critical factors are through the analysis of two distinct Web-based training programs conducted within the same Brazilian company. Hence, the research question in this article is: "What are the critical success factors associated with the implementation of these two Web-based corporate training programs?"

In order to achieve this goal, this work is structured as follows. First, the first section addresses the theoretical references used in this article. Then, the research method is outlined. After that, the two cases under analysis are described, and in the next section, the results accrued from them are compared. In the last section, the authors present some final comments.

Theoretical References

According to Wilhelmsem (2005) and Huitt and Hummel (2003), there are four knowledge fields associated with distance training, namely psychology, social science, pedagogy, and computer science. Figure 1 depicts how these four areas are interlinked, pointing to the crucial importance of social science and psychology—and learning theories—as the theoretical support for the areas of pedagogy and computer science, in order to enable the development of an instructional design aiming to apply information technology in education.

Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism are all theories addressing the learning process, as well as the nature of knowledge and its main facets (Wilhelmsem, 2005). For behaviorists, knowledge is characterized as a passive process. Learning is explained without reference to the mental processes, as its focus is on observable behavior and in the way individuals adapt themselves to the environment. For cognitivists, the learning process molds the individual's mental construction. Finally, for constructivists, knowledge is seen as relative and socially built, varying according to time and space (Wilhelmsem, 2005).

Behaviorism

For behaviorists, psychology is the science of behavior, rather than the science of the mind. Behavior is correlated to external factors—the environment—instead of internal factors (Campos, 1982). The theory of classic conditioning, developed by Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1939), has a psychologi-

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