

Chapter 17

Some Key Success Factors in Web-Based Corporate Training in Brazil

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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 chapter 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. Accordingly, the two aforementioned cases are investigated by using quantitative data analysis based on bi- and multi-variate linear regressions, as well as t-tests. The conclusions 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.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, market dynamics are becoming increasingly intense due to new strategic orientations and the pressing need for organizations 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 associ-

ated 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

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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 *et al.*, 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 paper 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, there is a section addressing 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. Then, in the last two sections, the

authors discuss the outcomes of the research and present some final comments.

BACKGROUND

In order to analyze the theoretical aspects related to distance training, it is necessary to examine three interrelated topics: psychology, education and information technology (Wilhelmsen *et al.*, 1998). More specifically, it is necessary to examine the main pedagogical approaches and the aspects of utilization of information technology as a way of applying same.

Pedagogical Approaches

With respect to pedagogical approaches, the two paradigms that became fundamentally influential from the 20th century onwards will be tangentially analyzed. These paradigms do not only include the vision of how the learning process is achieved, but also offer an insight into the very nature of knowledge – essentially, if knowledge exists in an absolute form, or if it is something that is constructed and relative. These two approaches are traditionally referred to as *instructivism/behaviorism* and *constructivism/cognitivism* (Wilhelmsen *et al.*, 1998).

The basic distinction between *instructivism/behaviorism* and *constructivism/cognitivism* lies in the concept of knowledge. For the former, knowledge is passive – automatic responses to external factors – whereas for the latter, knowledge is seen as an entity constructed by each student throughout the learning process. Knowledge from the *constructivist/cognitivist* standpoint does not have absolute characteristics as in *instructivism/behaviorism*, and cannot therefore be simply passed on from one person to another (Wilhelmsen *et al.*, 1998).

For the purposes of this article, the most important aspects of the *instructivist/behaviorist* approach are the concepts that the student must adapt

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