



Managed Learning Services

Solutions on a silver platter

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I was recently invited to a Go Live party by a customer. The speakers praised the results achieved to date in chronological order. The amortisation of investments in education is always difficult to calculate, and no one knows how much extra revenue is generated as a result, not to mention cost savings.

Nonetheless a lot of creativity in the investment calculation of the business case could convince. Of course, it is worth listening to the following counter argument which was crucial in the software selection process for one's own company. There are professional and technical challenges in each software introduction project – if all those involved can face them head on, so much the better. And if all those present nod their heads when they hear that everyone was on board, it is high time to praise the company's employees.

Since today, almost all tasks in the company are prepared, pre-discussed, considered, adjusted, agreed and lastly executed in inter-department project groups, the significance of team performance often proves to be **the** success factor. Behind closed doors, individual team members discuss their experiences: **Team** – great, someone else will do it.

However, the positive prevailing mood outbalances this: The schedules and the project budget were abided by – the management recognised this fact - and the long nights in the project office were quickly idealised because at the next performance appraisal, it brings in additional arguments for career planning. However, those who think that they can devote themselves to their core tasks following successful completion of the project are wrong.

Clever managers transfer the impetus of successful project work on to the next project, because “now new challenges need to be overcome”, true to the motto: Never was more the beginning than now (experienced project members cannot be drawn on such events because those who aren't present, do not receive any new work assignments). By this point in time, I register a perplexed face or sometimes even lack of understanding because with the roll-out of learning management solutions in the company normal operation is just beginning.

The management of training and further training in the company is not a simple task. Already from school days, everyone has a notion of untalented teachers and meaningless learning material. In short, one cannot please everyone: Sometimes the learning material is too short, sometimes too long and since the last trip to the cinema with 3D glasses, the requirements for animation effects for e-learning content have shifted more and more in the direction of Hollywood (besides: Purchasing these in this context is usually understood here as pure Bollywood). And things are no longer learnt for school or for life but rather for that which contributes to creating value in the company. Therefore it seems only natural that the same criteria apply for training and further training in terms of efficiency as for other areas of the business.

The core educational processes are summarised in the reference model in accordance with ISO/IEC standard 19796-1. Thus, it quickly becomes apparent which duties and responsibilities are to be tackled for Learning Management. Some examples are listed below:

- Existing learning arrangements must be updated and developed further with regard to learning design. This is also combined with the evaluation of possible course and learning material providers that offer standardised solutions to identified qualification topics. Alternatively, the development of company-specific learning material is usually examined which is then implemented by specialised content service providers.
- Ad-hoc educational issues from various specialist areas must be implemented quickly into the corresponding curriculum.
- Through corporate governance guidelines in particular, for risk and compliance-relevant issues, continuous training needs and, above all, requirements for certification arise which should be supported with the aid of the learning management solution.
- As the structuring and qualification of the courses is almost always associated with the company's objectives and also with the associated organisational form, the training and further training catalogue accordingly undergo continuous maintenance.
- Seminar logistics from selecting trainers to booking rooms right up to travel management is summarised under the "training administration" range of tasks.
- In general, regular reviews and evaluations are necessary from both the customers' and suppliers' perspective for operational and strategic educational programme planning in order to be able to introduce continuous improvements.
- When it comes to training management tasks, all nomination and invitation processes are closely connected to courses and learning opportunities. Identification of the "correct" target group for a course; participant administration and also the keeping track of company-critical training define the core tasks of a training manager.
- Overall communication with internal customers receiving training often ranges from canalisation and processing of technical and professional support requests to premium service at C level. New learning opportunities reach the relevant target groups within a short time, irrespective of the region or time zone. Feedback from participants regarding new learning formats is just a click away from the actual operation and is clearly more open in anonymised form. Dialogue with learners must, therefore, be actively maintained.
- Particularly in the context of obligatory learning measures (mandatory trainings), specific tracking, controlling and reports requirements are of particular relevance: Which employees have completed which educational measures, when, where and what was the outcome? Besides these reporting activities from education key performance indicators, addressing the most varied, target group specific decision makers, e.g. in compliance/risk management, controlling, product management, corporate marketing/communication is also of increasing significance.

Whilst the future tasks and decisions concerning direction for the technical infrastructure were usually already clarified with the people responsible for IT in the project and thus, it is clear whether the solution is worked on in-house as an ASP or Cloud application, the search for a technical system owner often begins at the same time as the project goes live: The implementation consultants have completed the order, the project organisation is resolved and the individual project members have long since been assigned to new important projects. By this point, it is clear that the tasks mentioned above cannot be carried out by willing trainees on a permanent basis. HR decision makers face a real dilemma: By the transition of paper and pencil based HR business processes to IT-supported and integrated learning management solutions, the gain in transparency and efficiency is impressive in terms of management of educational processes. But who will assume the task of technical coordination of the necessary training and learning services?

This example is symptomatic for many HR projects – starting with the increased use of social networks like Facebook for recruiting young professionals right up to further strategic initiatives like diversity, 50+ or talent management. The next project is always the most important.

Through a whole series of discussions with HR decision makers, the same image always emerges for me: Many HR areas today are “flooded” by a variety of strategic projects. No improvement seems to be in sight in the medium term. On the contrary: Due to the huge lack of specialists, additional forces must be mobilised in order to be able to keep pace with the war for talent. Thus, it is essential to relieve the HR departments of routine administrative duties.

The transfer of monthly payroll tasks to specialist service providers has been practised successfully for many years. The learning management tasks outlined above are also routine operational processes (learning operations); transferring these to specialist service providers represents so-called managed (learning) services. These are increasingly in demand from IMC AG’s customers. The division of labour is extremely simple: Educational strategy, operationalization into individual measures and controlling fall under the area of responsibility of the client; implementation is assumed by the managed services partner.

Those who develop, introduce and technically operate software systems are also clearly capable of implementing the operational processes and the technical operation. I could not agree more.

Yours

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