

The year ahead: Keep up with learning in 2010

As we speed towards a new decade, what changes can we expect to see in how learning at work is experienced and delivered? And possibly more importantly, how can we demonstrate the real business impact from this learning?

First, we're moving away from learning organised in order to be applied at some point in the future towards simply fetching information as and when we need it. This change is accelerating as we move further into an 'always on' online world where knowledge and know-how are at our fingertips.

The state of the economy will have a major impact, particularly in how it affects individual motivations to learn. In a climate where jobs are scarce, employees will be more proactive about learning to enhance their careers. Equally, employers will recognise that they need to offer the right tools and opportunities to learn if they want to retain the best talent as we emerge from recession.



With a likely change of government in 2010, e-learning will be seen as a way of reducing expenditure on training as public spending is cut. And I suspect smart public-sector managers will also spot the opportunity to share these costs between organisations by cutting out duplication of effort.

Will it be the year of mobile and social learning?

One crucial ongoing development next year will be the continuing move away from classroom-based learning. It's less relevant to the new generation of workers, it's costly and environmentally-unsound, although it will still play a part in the blended learning experience.

In fact, the increasing role of technology in people's lives generally and the growing popularity of social networking is already increasing the acceptance and comfort of technologically supported learning (or e-learning). Also, with more video-based learning online and learning via webinars, I suspect there will be more varied forms of e-learning delivered next year.

Technologically, I hope that 2010 will be the year that mobile applications finally make an impact in e-learning. With the increasing prevalence of smart phones, particularly with the iPhone's huge popularity and the rise of android phones, we are nearing the point where mobile becomes a genuine medium for learning at work.

But one of the most talked about areas of change is the role of social learning or informal learning. Although this should mean more informal learning at work, employers will still struggle to get to grips with how social networking can be used to organise and assess workplace learning.

Portals solve key business challenges

The transition towards learning portals, rather than a traditional learning management system (LMS) will continue as traditional LMS models come under further question. Particularly with 96% of US CEOs wanting evidence of the business impact of learning but only 8% seeing it now in their own organisations, learning and performance portals can be focused on solving key business challenges. Where mission-critical change is needed, these portals can be used to support specific campaigns.

Learning portals are supporting the rise of onboarding (or pre-induction), and this will grow next year. The pre-induction learning portal is proving to be an excellent tool to improve the engagement and productivity of new staff from their very first day. The Aberdeen Group Report on Effective Onboarding Techniques and Strategies made this one of its key recommendations for organisations looking to reduce training costs, improve employee engagement and increase productivity.

A new age?

The start of the noughties came at the end of the dot-com bubble, and now, as the decade closes, we are emerging from one of the worst recessions in living memory. Both are a result of speculation and guess-work. I would hope that the start of the twenty-tens will see a real focus in learning on the genuine business impact and return on investment it can deliver.

Note to editors - About Brightwave

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