



# Changing eLearning dynamics in the enterprise to user-generated content



# Introduction

Learning and development in the enterprise is changing rapidly. Learning teams can no longer keep up with requests for ad-hoc knowledge sharing and training, nor adequately support the demand for regional training in local languages. In contrast, with access to easy-to-use tools, subject matter experts can now create training courses and share their expertise with others directly. In fact, the growth of user-generated eLearning content, often promoted through enterprise social networks, is blossoming.

In this paper we look at the drivers behind user-generated eLearning content, share case studies and lessons learned from three enterprise organizations, and describe how enterprises are supporting content quality, accountability and culture change in user-generated learning.

# Why enterprises are interested in user- generated eLearning content

The pace and speed at which enterprises today change strategy and modify products is fast. This sets up a challenge for traditional learning departments: They must produce more content, more quickly than ever. In some cases, teams are even being downsized to just one person or five to 10 people in a company with more than 50,000 employees globally. To succeed, training teams have to focus on strategic company projects. This potentially leaves a whole range of training requests unfulfilled.

Even when learning departments can support such requests, the traditional process of interviewing subject matter experts, creating a learning course, and getting it approved often takes too long given how quickly content changes. Subject matter experts themselves have less time to explain and review content to learning teams.

The solution is user-generated content. It's faster, easier and, in many cases, more cost effective. The key is ensuring users have the right tools and support to succeed. Fortunately, easy-to-use eLearning tools are now widely available as Software as a Service, where enterprises can pay per user, as needed, with little to no upfront investment.

Learning and development teams can stop saying no to internal requests and start providing a platform that facilitates user-generated learning content.

# Managing the shift to user-generated content

Learning departments face inevitable questions as they move toward user-generated content:

## ***Will the content be any good? Who is accountable for the quality?***

The general rule is that eLearning content has an author's name and when a user puts their name to it, they generally care that the quality is good. Also, the best training content in an enterprise is often shared through informal networks; if you let users decide what's good, they will provide feedback and comments to help improve the content. Companies that have deployed user-generated content say this is much more effective than the traditional quality control workflow for validating learning content.

## ***Will the culture accept it?***

Employees generally accept change when it makes sense and they can see the positive benefit for themselves. User-generated content is reaching that tipping point, in part, because of the diversity of perspectives it fosters. Sharing knowledge from the source reflects not just one approved approach, but multiple approaches. For example, instead of one best case practice, you might end up with ten. Learners can then decide what works best for them and match the right training to their needs.

## ***Is my job secure? Will the power dynamics shift?***

Giving subject matter experts tools and support to create training courses benefits the entire organization. Learning designers can focus on strategic projects, including high-profile content, and also consult with users as needed. Stakeholders with smaller (yet still important) requests can have solutions built quickly by their own teams. Users can be empowered to create content in a timely manner where they see skills and knowledge gaps.



# How large enterprises are implementing user-generated eLearning

**Use Case: AkzoNobel, a leading global manufacturer of decorative paints and coatings with over 45,000 employees worldwide, started with user generated content over six years ago**



### CHALLENGE

Restructuring in the learning and development department left a one-person operation to support ad-hoc online training courses and requests. The department uses third-party developers for custom training for global or specific projects.



### SOLUTION

AkzoNobel decided to empower subject matter experts and learning and development professionals to create their own courses using an eLearning authoring tool by Articulate. Expectations were that initially 20-25 employees would create courses in the first year. Employees were provided on-brand templates with a basic didactical structure and instructional videos. The idea was to provide easy, effective and attractive tools and support.



### RESULT

Within the first year, 60 people were creating courses. Six years later about 125 people have created between 800 and 1,000 user-generated courses - for both internal and external customers. The cost savings/value averages between EUR 5,000-20,000 per course.

“As an L&D department you need to realize that a lot of training is developed outside your area of control. Projects happen throughout the company and often have a critical training component. By facilitating an easy-to-use authoring solution you can have an impact on that process by ensuring a more standardized, cost-effective and sustainable way of working. No more scheduling classroom sessions; learning content is available at the employees’ moment of need. The idea is no different than Wikipedia; our internal experts create the content and the user adaptation and feedback can be seen as basic quality control.”

Jeff Kortenbosch, *Senior e-Learning Specialist*, AkzoNobel

**Use Case: Nielsen, a global consumer research and insight company with over 40,000 employees in more than 100 countries, started a pilot for user-generated Learning content in Q4 2015**



### CHALLENGE

The global learning team needed to focus more on strategic, high-profile projects that yielded the most impact to the largest audience. It therefore needed a way to direct smaller requests, especially from regional teams and smaller functional areas, toward a self-service solution.



### SOLUTION

A comprehensive toolkit called myTraining Builder, including:

- Best practice guidance, FAQs, videos and other resources to aid in creating effective learning
- A self-paced wizard to help determine whether training is the answer and, if so, what kind of learning solution was the best fit
- A managed community on the company's enterprise social network for users to ask questions, share ideas and learn from each other
- Access to Easygenerator, a cloud-based authoring tool that enables users to generate their own eLearning, deployed via the enterprise LMS
- Sample courses and materials to inspire creative development
- Webinars that communicate the benefits and answer user questions

Instead of saying, "Sorry, that's outside the scope of what we can do", the global learning team can now offer a well-supported solution to stakeholders with smaller requests, and retain its focus on key global initiatives.



### RESULT

Users and key teams across Nielsen have piloted myTraining Builder and provided positive feedback. They especially like the ease and flexibility of Easygenerator. The next step is to raise awareness and publicize the solution more widely across the organization. Senior leaders and regional partners support it fully.

"As we developed our user-generated learning solution, we researched eLearning authoring tools that could support our needs for an intuitive, easy-to-use tool that delivers professional quality results. Our solution, myTraining Builder, provides all the necessary components for user-generated learning content – guidelines, templates, tools, including Easygenerator, as well as support from the learning team via our social media community. It's a win-win situation because the learning team can focus on the strategic priorities of the business while users are now empowered to efficiently create professional learning content that meets the needs of their teams. It's important to keep an open dialogue with users to ensure the solution evolves and continues to meet their needs."

Kevin Claus, *Director, Talent Engagement & Development*, Nielsen

**Use case: Kaplan, a global education provider in more than 30 countries with 19,000 employees, pioneered user-enabled eLearning early on**



**CHALLENGE**

Kaplan had a small corporate learning and development function supporting over 10,000 people inside its academic enterprise. The team had fewer people to support a larger audience, including support centers, physical campuses, and work-from-home employees. The learning and development team was running at capacity. It became apparent that the company needed a better way to share knowledge and enable users and subject matter experts to contribute to training courses themselves.



**SOLUTION**

Kaplan started with an informal approach: It used a wiki confluence that was familiar to employees, was searchable, and served as a single repository of information. Every piece of content had a name; if someone edited a piece of content, it was recorded. There was also an enterprise social network where users could share best practices and embed videos and links to interesting articles and learning content. At the time, Kaplan did not have a user-friendly eLearning development tool for users to create their own courses, but the company was headed in that direction.



**RESULT**

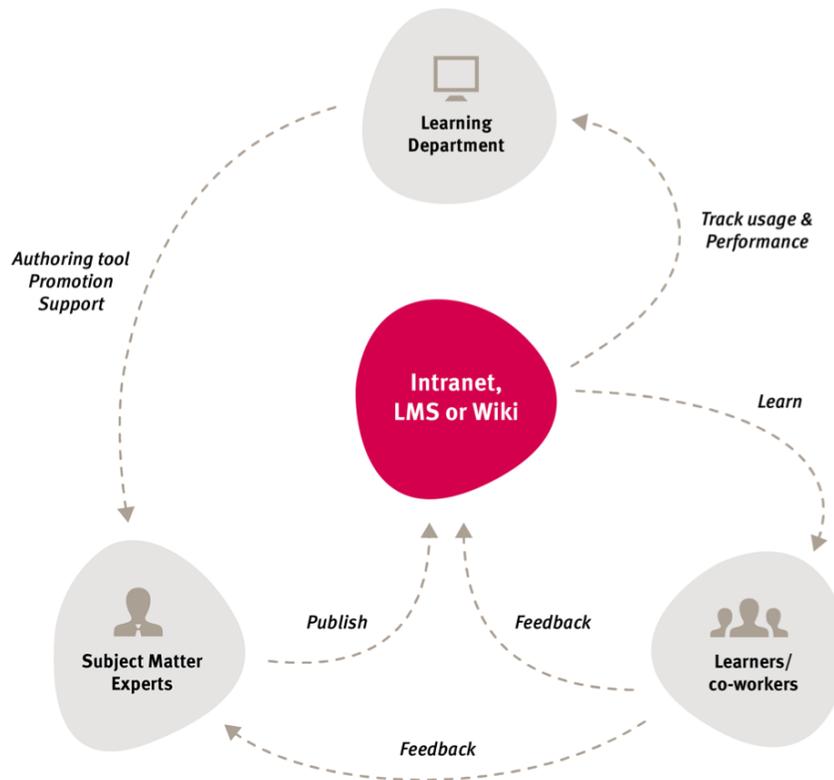
When Kaplan activated the community to share content, the volume of content increased and the content was published faster and in greater context than before. For example, subject matter experts could share content in pieces or in different formats, such as video. People felt their content was more valued. As they were encouraged to share information, the idea that they were providing something useful to their peers grew. They were helping people rather than helping organization.

“The trend towards user-generated eLearning content is inevitable and is happening both as information moves faster and as learning and development teams have to do more with less. eLearning software such as Easygenerator is making this easy for users. With the right process and workflow, learning teams can manage the process, but ultimately content quality will be determined by the community. It’s becoming a reality, but I think a lot of companies are just starting to consider it.”

JD Dillon, *Learning and Performance Consultant, and former Director Learning Technology and Development Director, Kaplan.*

# OVERVIEW

All this leads to  
this construction



# Recommendations

1

## **Develop a user-friendly toolkit that makes it simple for users to create training**

Develop a central hub where users can find and share knowledge on how to create training. Make it as appealing and as easy to use as possible. It could be a wiki, an Intranet page, a Wordpress site, or even part of the portal to your learning management system (if you have one).

Within that hub, develop and/or curate key resources, including industry best practices, how to get started/create training content, examples, brand and/or graphics guidelines, templates, how/where to share finalized content, and how to reach the learning team with questions and feedback. You might even develop a wizard or set of questions that helps users figure out what they need and whether training is really the answer for their business issue.

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2

## **Provide a platform that enables users to easily create and share training content**

Give users access to an intuitive platform for developing and deploying content; don't expect them to go find one on their own. eLearning software for non-experts has to be easy and intuitive to use, with templates to create content and strong technical support from the tool provider.

The learning and development team can play a strategic role in helping source a solution like Easaygenerator or Axonify and then continue to provide guidance and enablement to users, teaching subject matter experts to fish on their own.

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3

## **Promote the use of video**

The use of video for training continues to skyrocket – in large part because it's accessible on any connected device, and also because it's affordable to create using tools at hand, like a smartphone. Video can complement eLearning courses and even be embedded within them. It adds a level of personalization and connectedness – and users can generate their own video as quickly as content changes.

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## Recommendations

### 4

#### **Leverage feedback and analytics**

Solicit user feedback and gather analytics to continually improve what you offer. User feedback can come from a variety of sources, including comments on an enterprise social network, ratings on the quality of a course, and emails and conversations. The important thing is to pay attention to what users are saying about the quality and value of the training to them.

Leverage back-end analytics to track usage and performance-related data that are relevant to your business: e.g., volume of users, geographic location of users, content viewed, average time spent in a course or number of questions answered incorrectly in a course. Together with user feedback, you'll have a gold mine for ways to improve existing and future training.



### 5

#### **Build awareness by working with HR, regional teams and senior leaders**

Compliance training is typically bespoke produced and high profile or strategic projects are typically handled by learning and development teams or outsourced to third party experts. For everything else, user-generated Learning is very effective for scaling the learning department and enabling users who have knowledge and want to share it with others in the organization.



### 6

#### **Remember that user-generated content is not the answer for everything**

User-generated training is not appropriate in all situations; the industry of the enterprise and its internal culture will dictate many of these. For example, safety and compliance training is typically seen as high stakes and may not be handed off to users. Follow the guiding principles in your organization – but don't be afraid to challenge them either. User-generated eLearning can be very effective; start small and prove its value.



# From the CEO: Five Tips on making user-generated eLearning a success

1. Set up an easy flow for the whole process, from creation to publishing
2. Select tools that are easy to use with no learning curve
3. Start small, start advocating the authoring software, set up webinars and use your internal communications team, HR team and social media to raise awareness
4. Facilitate the learners, make it easy for them to give feedback and use that feedback to improve the process and tools
5. Track and measure your success – cost savings, courses completed, learner satisfaction.



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# About Easygenerator

Easygenerator helps you to create the next level of eLearning. We provide authoring solutions for non-eLearning professionals such as subject matter experts and trainers. eLearning should be effective, engaging and attractive, and Easygenerator is committed to assist you in creating such courses.

We do this through Easygenerator's cloud based eLearning authoring tool with:

- smart templates, instructional and graphical
- a structure for creating learning objectives
- measuring learning through assessments
- collaboration on courses
- a smart and effective review system
- content reuse
- one-click responsive publications: to the web, to any device, on any LMS

## The advantage of eLearning experience

Easygenerator was founded in 1996 and has its headquarters in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, as well as a production facility in Zhytomyr Ukraine, Colombo Sri Lanka and a sales office in New York USA.

Learn more about Easygenerator's solution and arrange for a free trial at **[www.easygenerator.com](http://www.easygenerator.com)**

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