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Choose your best digital learning

6 case studies show that blended mode improves quality, efficiency and cost of training.

A study by the Arizona State University Foundation and by the Boston Consulting Group shows that digital or mixed classroom / online training is the best. " *Making Digital Learning Work*", the extensive research report we refer to, presents six case studies on training online and concludes that strategic digital learning initiatives pay off for both students and companies.

The six examined institutions range from innovative universities (Arizona State University, Georgia State University, University of Central Florida) to community colleges (Houston Community College, Kentucky Community and Technical College System and Rio Salado Community College). The authors of the study point out that, unlike previous studies that have drawn conclusions mainly at the single course level, this research is aimed at studying the impact of online learning on entire organizations.

Blended training

Among these, four organizations offer courses in both formats (classroom and online). Three of these have found that blended mode (mixed classroom / online training paths) lead students to get better grades compared to grades obtained with attending courses only online or in the classroom only. In contrast, students from two community colleges have been shown to be more likely to get higher grades as a result of attending classroom courses.

Crossing this data, the report speaks of a "*digital learning paradox*": in some cases students perform slightly worse in online classes than face-to-face, but they are more likely to stick with online courses and graduate than they would with face-to-face courses.

In general, registrations are increasing at those universities that have initiated digital learning initiatives, offering flexible calendars and greater spatial mobility.

Is online course production cheap?

Some argue that online courses require more financial investment to ensure high quality. The report states that these costs are offset by a higher student-teacher ratio and fewer physical facilities.

Clearly, the universities that have found success in online training have not moved casually. For this reason, the report presents seven techniques that can help organizations implement digital training:

- Develop a digital learning strategy that meets the needs of different student targets.
- Invest in instructional design, learning and digital tools to offer quality products.
- Provide students with remote access.
- Treat faculty members as partners by allowing them to offer feedback, professional development opportunities and foster an innovation culture.
- Build a team in charge of sustaining the digital effort in the long run.
- Take advantage of the useful contribution of external suppliers.
- Develop research and analysis in order to intervene on reality.

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