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Customization in e-learning: benefits and methods

Customizing an online course increases student involvement, but is it always possible to create tailor-made content and at the same time achieve the training objectives?

In eLearning, everything starts from the training needs of the target. Personalization is a way to adapt the content and training experience to these needs. With a personalized path, the student can freely decide when, how and what to learn with clear training benefits. The point is how to customize an online course without losing sight of the training objectives? And then, is customization always possible in eLearning?

What does it means personalizing an online course?

Training in eLearning mode has in itself the advantage of letting learners choose how, where and when to follow a training course: on smartphones or tablets, at work or on the way home, in the evening or on weekends. Customizing an online course means adding another degree of freedom and allowing students to decide what to learn. The content of the training is designed according to the training needs of the target, but each person starts with his own degree of knowledge. Not all employees of a company who need to follow a computer security training course start from the same level of knowledge. With personalization, every employee of the company can decide what content he/she really needs.

The benefits of personalization in eLearning

This freedom of choice brings several advantages:

- **Participation**: the student is more involved if he/she chooses the content of the training;
- **Rate of completion of online courses**: it is easier to finish a course that we are passionate about;
- **Effectiveness of training**: the content of training is easier to remember;
- **Performance at work**: an employee who chooses what to learn and remembers what he/she has learned, will also be able to put it into practice and better improve his/her work.

How to personalize an online course and achieve the training objectives

The trainer must consider personalization when writing the training project. The secret is to ensure that every content is able to bring the student to the training objective. All roads lead to Rome, someone said. To guarantee an effective personalization you do not need an infinite list of contents, but a few measures are enough:

- Divide the content of the lessons into small modules to allow the student to select the micro-topic to learn;
- Make the sequence of lessons on the LMS flexible. This way, the student can skip the content he/she already knows and select the one he/she wants to learn;
- Design content with examples, case studies and games in line with students' interests;
- Predicting different ways of use of the same content: video, audio, text, presentations.
- Use techniques to present the content to be chosen based on the student's answers through adaptive learning.

Is it always possible to personalize eLearning training?

Although the personalization of online courses brings benefits, it is not always possible to realize it. For example, in the case of a corporate online course on security, you can not discard the training content, otherwise the standard is not reached. The same can be said for the courses for the issue of a professional certificate. In these cases, the trainer should have a hybrid approach to

personalization by providing mandatory content, without which it is not possible to move on to the following modules, and optional contents that the student can freely choose.
A personalized online course allows students to choose which educational content to get, with benefits in terms of involvement and work performance. In order not to renounce to these advantages, a hybrid approach can be adopted that includes standardized contents and personalized contents.

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