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E-learning in companies: advantages and trends

In the corporate environment, distance learning is becoming one of the most widely used methods to train workers. Here are the benefits of e-learning and the trends for 2022

In a fast-paced and ever-changing world, companies need to keep pace with changes in the market in general and in their industry in particular. For this reason, employee training is essential and covers both safety and job-related training. Traditionally, company training has taken place in the classroom and in person, but changes linked to new technologies, which are increasingly present in every aspect of daily life, and the increasingly hectic pace of life, which leaves little time available, have paved the way for the introduction of digital technology in **company training**. This trend was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced workers and companies to resort to distance learning. So, today, e-learning has entered the lives of many employees, representing an important step on the path to digital business transformation. Traditional lessons have not suddenly disappeared, but have gradually been replaced or complemented by digital realities and e-learning platforms.

E-learning in companies

Distance learning (ODL) is an important tool that is also increasingly used by companies to enable workers to take part in refresher or safety-related courses. Thanks to the network of modern technologies, ODL allows workers to take advantage of courses, which are useful for their professional development, in a completely different way than previously, when they had to physically go to the training sites. This required a lot of time and money on the company's part to organise the courses, which needed a specific physical space, teaching materials available to all users, the presence of a trainer and, in some cases, the consideration of costs and timescales for transport, food and accommodation.

E-learning, on the other hand, eliminates most of the features of face-to-face learning and allows workers to continuously access training relevant to their sector, without space and time constraints for the user, who can choose the time and place they prefer to access the course. To do so, simply connect to the e-learning platforms adopted by the company, so as to remain up-to-date on safety regulations and their field of work.

In 2011, the State-Regions Agreement of 21 December defined the training of workers, including in the text the possibility of using e-learning, understood as a "training and interactive model", carried out within structured groups, such as thematic virtual classrooms, or semi-structured, such as chats, "in which a computer platform operates", which allows participants to interact with the teacher or tutor and with each other. Digital training, the legislation specifies, does not consist only in the use of teaching materials via the Internet, but provides for the use of a computer platform capable of building a dynamic and interactive learning path, which allows the worker to be included in a virtual community. In this way, "the physical distance existing between the members of the study community is cancelled" and a continuous exchange of information is created, guided by tutors, whose role is to ensure the constant collection of needs, observations and information.

The advantages of e-learning

The use of distance learning by companies has several **advantages**, both for companies and workers. Among others, the following should be highlighted:

- Possibility of providing **continuous training**: without lengthy organisational steps, it is easier to schedule a larger number of online courses;
- Training a **larger number of employees** at the same time, without the need to organise trips, based on fixed dates and times;
- Reduce the costs of organising courses: e-learning has eliminated the need to find suitable venues to hold classes;
- More **effective** training, due to the variety of multimedia content (which can consist of written documents, videos, audio, animations, presentations);

- **Flexibility** of timetables and usage times: distance learning eliminates timetable constraints and saves time, since lessons can also be followed from home, without the need to travel.
- Possibility of **reaching distant territorial areas**, thus reducing the time and money invested in managing different courses in different areas, replaced by a single online event.

In addition, e-learning makes it possible to **monitor workers' progress** and to continuously and immediately update learning content, so that workers are always provided with up-to-date material. Finally, the organisation of an e-learning course can be immediate and timely, because digital training eliminates all the organisational activities that are necessary to hold a class in person: finding and renting a suitable venue, finding a professional or teacher available on the day of the course, transferring employees and printing the material to be provided to participants.

When analysing the advantages provided by distance learning, there are however some negative aspects to bear in mind. The digitisation of training also brings with it a greater difficulty of interaction between teacher and participants, which is more immediate in classroom training but can be more complex when the subjects are separated by a screen. Furthermore, a further limitation to the use of digital learning may be the unfamiliarity of some people with the use of new technologies, as well as the difficulties that may be encountered by people with disabilities.

Find out more about the advantages of elearning in the company in this infographic **Companies with more than 100 employees: 10 reasons to choose DynDevice LMS**

The characteristics

Fundamentally, distance learning is a form of learning, which allows people who use it to participate in courses, lectures or webinars without going to a predefined physical location. ODL can be of two types: **synchronous or asynchronous**. In the first case, these are webinars or virtual classes transmitted as they take place, where the lecturer delivers the lesson online while the participants are connected. In this case, therefore, training takes place simultaneously for all participants and at the same time as the tutor is delivering the lesson. In the case of asynchronous training, on the other hand, the user can make use of learning materials such as videos, images, infographics and documents at any time.

The 2011 legislation specifies the necessary conditions to allow the use of e-learning for corporate training and refresher courses on safety at work. In particular, the following must be taken into account

- **Location and equipment**: distance learning can be carried out at any location, 'provided that the hours devoted to training are considered as actual working time'. The equipment must be suitable for the use of the resources needed to use the ODL.
- **Tutor**: courses are given by an expert, who is able to provide workers with the necessary information;
- **Evaluation**: the e-learning mode may include self-assessment tests, to be carried out throughout the training.
- **Materials**: the digital mode allows the use of various and easily accessible learning materials, which are always available to the user, who can use them when he/she considers it necessary. The language must be clear and appropriate to the recipients.

Subsequently, the State-Regions Agreement of 7 July 2016 extended the courses allowed in e-learning to include refresher and specific training courses, not only related to safety.

The e-learning trends of 2022

Every year, different trends emerge in the field of e-learning, which are developed from time to time, in a constant evolution. In 2019, for example, the following trends were reported:

- Video-learning: use of videos recorded by teachers;
- Mobile learning: learning via smartphones or tablets;
- Gamification: user engagement through gaming;
- Social learning: all users are called upon to intervene in the creation of a shared and commentable learning experience;
- Micro learning: learning in a nutshell;
- Blended learning: use of online and classroom learning content.

In 2021, however, the reported trend was the use of user-generated content. Several American companies had declared that they use **user-generated content** or intend to use it for corporate training. In particular, content provided by non-experts can take a variety of formats, such as images and videos made using a smartphone, demonstrations produced with Power Point, or comments and answers left on relevant forums.
But every year, the situation evolves and the e-learning trends to watch out for in **2022** are:

1. **Hybrid solutions**: online training can be combined with face-to-face training. One possibility is the recording of webinars, which can then be delivered later, via digital platforms;
2. **Increasing interactivity**: paying attention to the interaction of users and teachers and between users, to make learning more effective;
3. **No-code tools**: these are literally "no-code" tools, which allow the use of attractive graphics to create interactions between users;
4. **Accessible e-learning**: over time, companies have realised the need to make digital training accessible to all users. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt e-learning to visual, hearing and motor disabilities.