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Employee-generated learning: what it is and how to derive value from it

Employee-generated learning reduces the time and costs involved in developing training content for companies. Discover the benefits of this approach.

Usually, training materials for eLearning are developed by instructional designers and training professionals. This content creation process is often slow, expensive and requires constant updating and maintenance.

According to **Chapman research**, it can take **up to 267 hours of development time to create one hour of interactive eLearning content**.

An **instructional designer**, in fact, does not have the specific technical knowledge on the topics that are the subject of the courses and will have to interview experts to collect the correct information. Then, once the information has been gathered and turned into teaching content, it will be necessary for the expert to check and possibly double-check it.

As a result, content development becomes a very **slow and expensive** process.

But there is a further problem: very often course **content becomes obsolete**. This can happen, for example, when company procedures are changed, regulations change or new working methods are implemented. The instructional designer, however, is not always aware of these changes and the course contents are therefore not updated and become obsolete.

How can the content creation process be made leaner and more profitable? There is a solution and it is the so-called **'employee-generated learning'**.

In this article, we will analyse:

- **What Employee Generated Learning is and how it works**
- **The benefits of EGL for companies**
- **Challenges and limits of employee generated learning**
- **How to implement the EGL approach in the company**

Employee-generated learning: what it is and how it works

Employee-generated learning is a peer-to-peer training model that entrusts employees with the responsibility of creating training content.

In this approach, **instructional designers** may instruct employees, assist them, co-create with them, but they do not take responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the content. This responsibility remains in the hands of the company's in-house subject matter experts, i.e. those who know best about internal procedures, how they work and where the information is located.

Collaboration between the two profiles (designer and subject matter expert) thus helps to achieve training goals much more quickly and effectively, strengthening the organisational culture of the company.

The benefits of employee-generated learning

As we have seen, employee-generated learning is a faster and cheaper method of developing eLearning content. But the advantages of this approach are many: let's discover them together.

- **The company saves time and money**

Employee-generated learning streamlines the learning content development process, saving the company time and money. In fact, this approach requires less time for content approval and updating.

- **Increases productivity**

If someone in your company has a doubt, chances are that a colleague has the answer. Employee-generated learning allows you to capture this knowledge and ensure that everyone always has the answers at their fingertips, without having to involve other colleagues, which increases team productivity.

- **Makes training truly tailor-made**

Content generated by your employees ensures that the audience receives very specific training. This type of content is in fact adapted to the reality of the company and does not only focus on theoretical knowledge from outside. Who knows the details of the procedures, the particularities and the type of people involved in the training better than the employees?

- **Retain knowledge within the company**

Normally, when a qualified employee leaves the company, he/she takes his/her knowledge with him/her. Employee-generated learning enables employees' knowledge to be acquired and retained even when they leave.

- **Increases loyalty and involvement of experienced employees**

Generating training content that helps other colleagues do their jobs better increases professional motivation. Teaching is a rewarding task and encourages experienced employees to connect with the company values and the rest of the team on a deeper level.

Challenges and limitations of employee-generated learning

Although the benefits are obvious, companies may have valid concerns about entrusting the process of producing training content to in-house experts. Let us take a look at some of the possible challenges typical of employee-generated learning.

Lack of time

One of the most common objections concerns the lack of time for in-house experts to devote to the development of training content.

Actually, looking at the issue from a broader perspective, experienced employees are already the contact persons of the L&D department when a new course needs to be developed. And, as we saw at the beginning of the article, traditional methods of content creation can be very time-consuming both for the initial interview phase and for the processes of checking and maintaining the material.

Moreover, experienced employees are also the point of reference for other colleagues, who turn to them on a daily basis to clarify doubts or solve problems.

All these activities are recurring and time-consuming. Therefore, the one-off effort to create the training content still **saves the company's experts a lot of time in the long run**.

Quality of content

Another concern of companies relates to the correctness and quality of the training content generated by employees.

However, these concerns also apply to materials produced by an instructional designer. On the other hand, when instructional designers develop course materials, they are not able to verify their accuracy themselves.

In both cases, a review process is necessary to allow experienced employees to **verify the training content** and provide feedback.

Limited use

Employee-generated learning is not suitable for all types of courses.

In general, we can say that it is particularly effective when courses are **very specific and targeted at a limited audience**. The larger the number of employees a course is aimed at and the broader and more cross-cutting the subject matter, the more likely it is to be developed by the L&D department.

How to implement employee-generated learning in the company

The approach to employee-generated learning requires a change in mindset and business processes.

Every company has a wealth of untapped knowledge that is not necessarily recorded and categorised within courses, training materials, guides or procedures. Employee-generated learning enables **this know-how to be captured and shared**. But how to do it?

The first step is to teach experienced employees how to create training materials themselves, both from a design and technical point of view. Secondly, you have to provide them with appropriate tools for the creation of your content.

In general, the best choice is an eLearning platform equipped with tools for course creation and delivery, such as **DynDevice LMS**. Alternatively, you can opt for an intranet page, a website or a Wiki. In any case, the most important thing will be to make this space as attractive and user-friendly as possible.