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How to harmonize self-directed learning and online courses?

Deciding yourself what to learn seems to be in contrast with the concept of an e-Learning course designed by a trainer. In reality, online training is perfectly suited to self-directed learning, strengthening and directing it.

Self-directed learning can be defined as the drive for autonomous learning. It is the student who decides what and how to learn in complete autonomy. If the self-taught person seems to suffer from a traditional classroom course, on the contrary he/she finds in e-learning a fertile ground to give life to the desire to learn without renouncing the wise guidance of a trainer. Online courses are not only compatible with self-directed learning, but they are also able to reinforce the drive for learning and channel it in the right direction.

1. Self-directed learning and online education for adults

Before analysing the strong complementarity between self-directed learning and online courses, first we have to understand the characteristics of this type of learning. In general, a self-taught is an adult who gets out of the classical student-teacher system of knowledge transmission and takes autonomous decisions. This is even more true for the Millennials, who are a constantly evolving the labour market. The self-taught is able to:

- analyse his/her training needs;
- set educational objectives;
- find educational resources;
- choose his/her own learning strategies;
- evaluate his/her training goals.

If we think of this, all these activities are those that a trainer considers before creating or curating e-Learning content. In fact, in the design phase of an online course a trainer leverages the student's self-learning drive to improve his or her training experience.

2. Self-directed learning, a successful learning process

In every field there are renowned examples of people who have left formal education to acquire on their own the new skills that the labour market demanded. Henry Ford and Bill Gates are two examples of how we can succeed without a formal degree of study, but with a strong drive for self-learning.
This introduces another characteristic of self-directed learning, i.e. the need to respond to the acquisition of skills that traditional training can't give or that offers when it is too late. In this case e-Learning can be an excellent ally of the self-taught, because it provides the specific contents needed to achieve the skills required when it's necessary.

3. The flexibility of e-Learning and self-directed learning

Another point of contact between online training and the needs of the self-taught is the possibility of benefiting from the training contents in a totally flexible way. A good e-Learning trainer is able to design a course divided into small modules that the student can access from any device, even mobile and at any time, at home, during lunch break, on means of transport.

4. Self-directed learning and e-Learning trends

Finally, there is a strong link between online courses and the drive for self-learning that is emerging and evolving in the e-learning industry. A fundamental characteristic of the self-taught is the freedom to choose the content of the training. The

effort to personalize online courses makes e-learning the most suitable type of training for self-learners. Adaptive learning, microlearning, artificial intelligence, gaming and content management are the latest e-Learning trends that can perfectly respond to the needs of personalization necessary to the self-taught.
Self-directed learning is a drive for self-learning arising from the challenges of the new labour market that can be supported only by the e-learning industry: this is because it offers the personalized training experiences needed by self-taught people.

Article taken from eLearning Industry