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How to set up an e-learning project: step by step guide

What are the steps needed to launch an e-learning course? From finding a customer to setting a budget, here are all the tips you need to get your online learning project off the ground.

From schools to universities, from hospitals to companies and businesses, most organisations have now introduced digital technology into their **training and learning programmes**. In this respect, the Covid-19 pandemic has given a major boost, forcing all training institutes, companies and the public administration to find effective ways of reaching workers and users at a distance. Moreover, the advantages it offers have brought e-learning into the spotlight, prompting employers to use online courses for a wide range of needs, from refresher to safety training. Today, this learning methodology represents a great opportunity for companies and workers. But how do you set up an e-learning project? Where do you start and what are your objectives? Here is a guide with all the necessary steps to start an e-learning project.

Steps to start an e-learning project

Starting an e-learning project requires **planning**, attention and organisation. And it is not always easy to find your way around the steps to take and those to avoid. Therefore, it may be useful to take the following **steps** as a guide:

1. Decide who to address
2. Choosing which content to propose
3. Create some lessons
4. Identify a suitable platform
5. Establish the price of the course
6. Launch the project

These are the steps to follow in order to design an effective online tuition package.

Deciding who to address
At the heart of course design is the user. Even before deciding what content to offer, it is necessary to define your target audience, i.e. the people to whom the course will be directed. The most effective way to do this is to imagine your typical client, thinking about the characteristics they might have and the goals they would like to achieve. When imagining your user it is a good idea to give them an approximate age, a gender distinction (if this might affect the type of course to be offered) and their location. Once this has been done, one can move on to defining the objectives of the possible client, based on his/her probable needs and difficulties. In this way, you will be able to define your audience and move on to the next step.

Choosing which content to propose
The second step is to **choose the content** to be broadcast: this must be calibrated on the basis of the audience you want to reach. To start with, it might be useful to prioritise the most important content, i.e. the skills that the user needs to acquire as soon as possible. At a later stage, lessons can be included that deal with more specific or ancillary topics that build on the skills initially acquired.
In order to ensure that the user proceeds in an orderly fashion and acquires all the knowledge included in the course, it is possible to create modules, to be completed each time. When choosing the content, it is important to bear in mind that most people do not like long lessons that can become boring. Therefore, it is better to structure short modules that allow the user to learn something concrete in the shortest possible time. The chosen content can be proposed in different ways, but in general, it would be more effective to integrate passive resources (texts, videos or audio files) with active ones, which stimulate the user, such as tests, games or questionnaires.

Creating some basic lessons
Before starting the e-learning programme, it is a good idea to create some basic lessons in advance, containing the basic topics

for approaching the course topic. These first lessons may already allow users to test their learning progress, so that they can see the effectiveness of the course demonstrated.

Identifying a suitable platform
In order to participate in an e-learning course it is necessary to rely on a suitable **online platform**. These are Learning Management Systems, or LMSs, which allow users to access a wide range of content provided by the organiser. On these platforms you can find, for example, video content, documents to download, images and summary graphics, audio files and group chats in which you can intervene. An adequate online platform must allow the course organiser to create a space where he can interact directly with the users, offer different payment solutions, view statistics on the videos uploaded and easily manage the uploading and updating of the lessons.
In order to choose the most suitable platform, the user's needs must also be taken into account. The following aspects should be considered

- **Simplicity**: a platform that is easy to use allows everyone to use it and guarantees greater participation, because even less experienced users can access it easily.
- **Engagement**: if the platform is engaging and stimulating, the user will be more likely to access it again. Therefore, one aspect to take into account is the user's learning experience.
- **Verification tools**: these are the tools that allow to verify the progress and the degree of learning of the user.
- **Integration**: especially at the beginning, a platform that integrates the new tools with the traditional ones previously used by the users can help, both to better facilitate learning and to avoid having to renew all the tools available to a company at the same time.
- **Compatibility**: the platform must be compatible with any device, including smartphones, to allow users to follow the e-learning programme at any time and in any place, without having to be tied to a particular device, which they may not have.
- **Accessibility**: Everyone should be able to follow online courses easily. Therefore, the platform must provide the necessary functions to make the lessons accessible also to people with disabilities.
- **Security**: the platform must guarantee security and privacy as users enter their personal information on it.

Setting the price of the course
Once you have defined the audience, the content and the platform to be used for the implementation of an e-learning programme, the time comes to decide how much to charge users. Setting the price of your course is not an easy task. To do so, however, you can follow these **tips for setting the price of an online course**. Among others, it is important to focus on the quality of the content and not the length of the course, as a short course is often more effective than long lessons. It is clear, however, that regardless of the length of the individual lessons, the course must be complete and meet the stated objectives. Furthermore, it may be useful to set one's own business goal, i.e. to ask oneself what the economic expectations of this project are. In any case, it is not certain that once the price of the course has been set, it can be revised and modified, depending on the evolving needs and the number of users who enrol.

Launching the project
Once the previous steps have been completed, the project is ready to be launched. The organiser then has to make his e-learning course known. How? For example, through pages or profiles on social networks created ad hoc or already present. Other ways might include sending out emails about the course, offering free trial lessons or distributing promotional coupons. Using some LMSs, the launch and sale of the course is actually followed directly by the platform, but the organiser will be asked for a percentage of the sales.

Why start an e-learning project?

Designing an online course programme therefore requires time, work and organisation. In recent times, companies have had to implement e-learning out of necessity, as workers are unable to travel to a physical location due to lockdowns imposed by governments in various countries around the world. In this situation, the design of online courses became necessary and left employers no choice in their use. But why would a company continue to use them now, despite the fact that the situation no longer requires such behaviour? The reason is simple: organisers and employers have discovered the **advantages of e-learning**, both from an economic point of view and in terms of training effectiveness.

In addition to allowing employees to attend classes from anywhere at any time, online courses allow employers to provide **continuous training** by eliminating organisational steps between courses, and they can train many employees at the same time

without being constrained by space or location, as online classes can reach anyone, anywhere in the world, without the need to organise travel. All this allows companies to cut the costs of training and refresher courses. In fact, e-learning eliminates the costs of renting facilities, hiring cars, parking and meals. Consequently, the environmental impact, which is higher with traditional face-to-face and in-person teaching, is also reduced. In addition, e-learning allows companies to monitor results, checking the quality and effectiveness of training, provide customised courses, keeping them up-to-date, and make dozens of different courses available to the user.

Given the advantages that e-learning brings to companies and users and the development that this method has been having in recent years, designing a package of online courses can be useful and profitable, despite the effort required to organise it. But by following the steps listed above, setting up an e-learning project could be easier and more straightforward.

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