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Lifelong Learning: the role of eLearning in lifelong learning

Let's find out how online learning can support lifelong learning in both the professional and personal fields.

The learning journey is a lifelong journey. No one can ever say they have arrived when it comes to **training**, because the world evolves and in every area new challenges and possibilities present themselves, always accompanied by new concepts to learn and experiences to have. The concept of training may therefore not be strictly linked to school or courses carried out in the workplace: education lasts throughout life, begins even before school age and never ends. In this case, we are talking about **lifelong learning**, i.e. permanent training. In this perspective, **eLearning** also plays a fundamental role, which takes learning outside the physical confines of institutes and workplaces and breaks down the barrier of time.

What is lifelong learning?

The term lifelong learning, which can be translated into Italian as "**permanent training**", refers to training that develops **throughout one's life**. It is an individual process chosen by the individual intentionally, with the aim of acquiring greater skills and new skills for their work role, or simply to keep their learning active and increase their knowledge.

Lifelong learning is based on a **personal and personalized approach**. Personal, because the single individual becomes responsible for his own learning, in a sort of self-education that the person undertakes to carry out regardless of his trainers or the knowledge tests placed at the end of the learning programs. Personalised, because ongoing training becomes a tailor-made approach for the individual, who can follow their own needs and inclinations to achieve the objectives they have set themselves. In this, lifelong learning is also facilitated by the use of new technologies, which give the possibility of learning at any time and from any place, eliminating any physical barriers.

Lifelong learning can act both in the **professional field**, where the individual aims to increase their skills in the workplace, aiming at the acquisition of new knowledge, and in the **personal field**, when the person intends to learn new things for their own sake, which can help them increase their cultural and experiential baggage.

In general, training includes various forms of learning, including:

- **Formal**, in which the learning offer comes from public education courses, which ultimately leads to the achievement of a qualification;
- **Non-formal**, when the path does not give rise to official qualifications or diplomas;
- **Informal**, when the training concerns everyday life situations.

To overcome this differentiation and promote the individual's fulfillment from an educational and social point of view, lifelong learning plays an important role. The objective of lifelong learning, in fact, is to contribute to the creation of an integrated training system, which unites schools, educational institutions, adult training centers, businesses and industries. Lifelong learning therefore has the function of promoting the fulfillment of individuals, with the aim of achieving the collective development of the community.

Why use lifelong learning?

Lifelong learning plays an important role in modern society. But, in concrete terms, why should people and companies use it? **Lifelong learning** brings various advantages to individuals who decide to take advantage of the constant training flow that learning provides throughout their lives. Overall, this type of training can have several benefits for individuals:

1. **Increase your personal wealth of knowledge, experience and skills**. People who decide not to stop their education can enrich their knowledge and acquire new skills, not necessarily linked to their work, but also to their interests.

2. **Improve your job role**. Workers who do not abandon training will be more updated on new developments in the sector and this will give them an edge over their colleagues who have decided not to take care of their education once they enter the world of work. An individual who knows cutting-edge methods and has acquired the ability to manage new problematic situations is more in demand on the job market.
3. **Increase one's motivation**, both professionally and personally, because learning brings satisfaction and makes people more inclined to want to improve.
4. **Stay up to date**, both on topics that concern your work environment and on general interests, so as to be able to integrate seamlessly into the constantly evolving contemporary society and stay in step with the times.
5. **Reduce the fear of change and increase the ability to adapt**. An adult person who decides to follow the path of lifelong learning gets involved and questions all the certainties and goals achieved up to that point, recognizing that they have not arrived from a training point of view. This also allows him to develop a high ability to adapt to new situations and, consequently, to banish the fear of change, which often characterizes people who are not inclined to change their condition.

Lifelong learning does not only bring benefits to individuals, but **businesses** can also benefit from it.

1. **More qualified employees**. A worker who undertakes a lifelong learning path will acquire greater knowledge and new skills, which he will be able to exploit in his own sector. The company will certainly also benefit from this situation, because it will have a more qualified employee in its team who is always up to date with work news and updated. Furthermore, the desire to learn new concepts and skills will make employees more attentive and present in their own work reality, which represents a testing ground for them to implement the innovations learned in the ongoing training course.
2. **Increased cohesion** of the working group. Especially when training takes place in a group, the time spent among colleagues increases and this gives greater opportunities to get to know each other and, consequently, also improve relationships between employees in the workplace. Furthermore, ongoing training encourages those who participate in it to engage in discussion and dialogue, encouraging the development of better interpersonal relationships and a winning team spirit. The increase in cohesion in the work group ensures more efficient communication between employees, a fundamental quality for the success of the work project.
3. **More motivated and satisfied workers**. Permanent education leads employees to want to experiment in the workplace with the new skills acquired during the training course and therefore makes them more motivated to improve, in a sort of virtuous circle between learning and work. For this reason, lifelong learning can be an advantage for the company, because it provides not only more qualified employees, but also more committed employees in the workplace. Furthermore, the company can also benefit from the typical advantages that learning has on the individual. This is the link that exists between training and improvement of individual well-being. Learning, in fact, increases people's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities, important characteristics for gaining confidence even in the workplace.
4. **Increased employee sense of belonging**. A company that invests time and money in the field of lifelong learning indirectly increases its workers' appreciation for the company. In fact, people will feel appreciated and valued, knowing that their employer cares about the development of their skills and competences, their personal and professional growth and their education. This will lead employees to feel more involved in the activities of the company they work for and, consequently, they will be led to improve their work performance. By doing so, the company will also be able to benefit from lifelong learning.
5. **Prestige and enhancement of the company image**. Lifelong learning leads to improving the quality of the services offered by the company, because the staff is continuously trained and always acquires new skills and knowledge, which allow them to always keep up to date. This puts the company in a good light even from external perspectives, because the resulting image is that of a quality and prepared company.

The **advantages** brought by lifelong learning concern both individuals and companies. Ongoing training allows people to expand their knowledge and acquire new skills, which guarantee continuous change and greater personal satisfaction. On the other hand, companies can also apply a permanent training program which, in a world of continuous and rapid change, has at its disposal the necessary skills to renew itself and keep up with the times, thanks to the presence of constantly trained employees.

The role of eLearning in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is an advantageous learning method, especially in the contemporary world, where life flows faster and the job market is constantly changing and in the process of being permanently updated. **Promoting lifelong learning** can therefore prove to be a winning aspect for companies and can also bring benefits to individuals who decide to undertake this training path

regardless of job opportunities. Lifelong learning, in fact, is not linked to one's employment career, but can continue throughout one's life, even once retired, for the pure personal satisfaction of learning new knowledge and skills.

In this panorama, **eLearning** plays a central role, because the new technologies on which it is based facilitate the development of lifelong learning. Online learning, in fact, can arrive anywhere and at any time, without being relegated to a specific place or time. These features allow anyone to have access to it: all you need is a computer, a tablet or a smartphone and an Internet connection to start a digital training journey. In promoting lifelong learning, eLearning plays a triple role:

1. **It allows training to reach everyone**, breaking down any physical barrier and allowing people to learn new concepts and acquire additional skills even from home. In this way, a worker is not necessarily physically tied to his company and does not necessarily have to carry out training on site. Furthermore, anyone, of any age and belonging to any reality, can decide to undertake the lifelong learning path, without needing particular previous skills or tools to access it.
2. **It allows learning at any time in life**. We are often used to thinking of training as a path linked to school or, at most, to the work environment. But is not so. Even a person who has already finished school and is already retired may have the desire to learn new things. eLearning comes to the aid of all these individuals, untying training from a physical place and a pre-established time, thanks to the multiplicity of online courses it offers and which can be accessed by anyone and at any age.
3. **It guarantees the personalization of the training path**. Another fundamental aspect of lifelong learning is the possibility of choice left to the individual. Precisely because it is a sort of self-training, the person who decides to undertake this path is free to choose which aspects to delve into and which topics to focus on, depending on their interests and inclinations or needs. Online courses allow participating users to create an ad hoc path, tailored to each participant.

Lifelong learning is an important aspect of learning, which society is led to pursue. A fundamental ally to achieve this objective is eLearning, which thanks to the use of new technologies allows training to reach everyone, at any time in their lives, allowing lifelong learning.