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Self training: how to create an individual training plan

How to help students choose their own learning path by exploiting the potential of their LMS

Self-directed learning, as defined by Malcolm Knowles, is a process in which students take the reins of their own training by deciding the objectives, resources and final evaluation.

An **eLearning platform** lends itself perfectly to **self-directed learning** because it provides in one place all the training content a student needs and the flexibility to learn when and where they want.

However, the experience of the Internet, with its immense breadth of resources, teaches us that choosing amidst so much information is not at all easy. That is why it is not enough to have a set of resources in order to make self-learning effective.

Trainers can support learners in creating an ideal training plan by leveraging the potential of their **LMS, learning management system**.

Organizing content within the LMS

Typically, content within an LMS is organized by topic and in chronological order. Both methods are useful because they help learners find what they need by doing a keyword or date search.

However, they don't help with figuring out which way to start with the training. That's why it would be helpful to take an initial **self-assessment test** before a topic and a quiz at the close to check the skills learned.

Based on the score achieved, the student gets suggestions on other related modules. Some more complex topics may be linked to the completion of introductory modules; when the student already has a good grasp of the subject matter, he or she can move on to in-depth modules instead.

The student is left with the freedom to choose what to learn and when to complete the modules while the trainer more ensures a more consistent navigation, organized by levels and achievements.

Using matrices to help students make decisions

When there are many useful topics, it is possible for the student to be undecided about which one is the most urgent to learn. The risk in self-education is to start multiple tracks and then abandon them due to lack of **motivation** or simply lack of time.

This type of learner needs tools to help them make decisions. Matrices used to assign priorities such as the Eisenhower Matrix revisited could come in handy.

Needs are divided into four macro-categories:

- urgent and non-urgent
- important and not important

Combining the four categories, it is possible to assign priorities to activities

- Important and urgent: must be done immediately
- Important and non-urgent: can be done at a later date
- Not important and urgent: can be delegated (perhaps by asking colleagues for information or writing on the forum)
- Not important and not urgent: not necessary for training

Encourage discussion among students

Despite having prioritized and begun training at their own level and in their own time, the student may need extra incentive to complete self-selected courses.

By design, you can present the same content in different formats so that the student can choose to watch videos, listen to podcasts, read text, or do simulations.

In addition, you can always include elements of **gamification**, to make learning a challenge and a game, even with your colleagues, and moments of exchange with other students. A forum, a live meeting, a group work with other people who have shared their path can instill more motivation even in the student who likes to learn independently.

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