

Reusable Learning Objects in Corporate Training

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The use of **Reusable Learning Objects (RLOs)** has gained popularity within the corporate realm as the use RLOs as training tools offer many advantages which include an increased gain at a lowered cost.

Definition

Learning objects are compact electronic resources of educational information and instructions on one or more learning objectives which are independent and are categorized as adaptable, elastic, reusable, customizable, interoperable, and retrievable, which facilitate competency-based learning, and increase the value of content. When a learning object can be used and reused without the need of any or extensive modification, it would classify as a Reusable Learning Object.

Content of such resources may vary from brief to very complex and may involve elements linked to external sources such as the World Wide Web; such linkage to outside sources will add the requirement of validating such sources prior to usage.

Advantages

A major benefit of RLOs is the flexibility they offer. RLOs enable employees to complete lessons at their own pace, during a time which is most convenient to them. In contrast, conventional instructor-led classes may not always be the best option for employees, especially in today's fast-paced world filled with demanding schedules and tight deadlines. A training program will not be effective if the employee is thinking about what work needs to be done, rather than focusing on the training. By offering the employees a self-study option which they can complete when they want to, there is a higher likelihood that they will internalize the material they are presented with.

RLOs can also be designed as the means to evaluate the employee's knowledge of the content learned following the lesson, and as such can be used to assess the employee's progress to determine how much, if needed, continued training is required. Other RLOs may be designed to assess employees' problem solving skills in a real-time format and thereby putting theory into practice.

RLOs are further beneficial as the means of training new employees or their introduction to the corporation's mission objectives; considerably lowering cost and training time required. Such usage of an RLO can act as an FAQ, answering many questions a new employee may have to get started on their projects, saving days, even weeks compared to an instructor-led training course. Ability to search the content can be a great asset as a resource for all employees who may need to seek data on a topic.

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A major benefit of RLOs is that they can be tailored to meet a specific learning objective, and offer a customized learning experience. For instance, a specific goal may be to train employees' business etiquette for an upcoming meeting in Japan – a country where business etiquette is extremely important to building successful interpersonal and inter-corporation relationships.

RLOs can also be designed to fit the specific needs of the corporate culture within the organization. For instance, IT professionals may benefit from computer-based learning whereas HR managers may be more receptive to a training program which combines computer-based learning with a training video.

Internet distributed RLOs allow employees to access material anytime, anywhere. This can be very advantageous to a company as even employees of branches located in different countries will have access to the same borderless training opportunities. This type of distribution benefits a corporation by ensuring consistency in training and access to a company's knowledge base to all employees. Flexibility further benefits a company as an RLO may be reused and/or modified as building blocks for a larger training program.

Costs

There are a number of items to review when considering the cost of implementing an RLO into a corporate training program which include the creation, implementation, and integration or conversion of existing content to meet the needs of the corporation(s) interested in a particular RLO.

The size and scope of an RLO is likely to need the involvement of several "experts" in the research, design, development and implementation stages. For instance, individuals from HR may provide expertise on training and implementation, while an IT professional may be required to develop an interactive website. Others may be commissioned to develop diagrams and write the copy. Managers may evaluate the results of any testing. Professional translators may be required in adaptation of the RLO for branches in different countries. Conversion of existing training programs into a series of RLOs can be an exhausting process which requires a lot of time and effort which may also require the involvement several individuals.

Delivery costs also depend on the distribution system used where an online distribution has a lower cost than that of production and distribution of digital media or paper formats. Even though the initial development and implementation cost of an RLO can be high, their reusability and integration into a larger training program, the initial costs may yet be lower than administering a traditional classroom training format;

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especially in a large corporation with worldwide branches. Nevertheless the long-run cost of implementation of an RLO, including maintenance costs, is more cost-effective.

Conclusion

Reusable Learning Objects require considerable personal investment in order to realize their potential. Employees must be fully committed to completing the training program for the success of a RLO's delivery of employer's desired learning objectives. RLOs should be engaging and beneficial to the employee on both personal and professional levels, to motivate participants to incorporate the content in real-life scenarios. The RLO should facilitate the learning process and ease the employee's progress through, or to jump to desired modules based on a learning plan. The overall benefits of implementing an RLO into a training program can be immense in building a unified corporate culture of learning, thereby help to improve workplace efficiency, and employee confidence in their daily tasks.

Bibliography

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