

THE HINDU

Date:14/03/2005 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/edu/2005/03/14/stories/2005031400160300.htm>

Acquire soft skills through e-learning

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Learning made sophisticated

E-LEARNING IS usage of network technologies to create, foster, deliver and facilitate learning anytime and anywhere. It holds the key to gearing India's talent pools to meet the demands of the global knowledge industry.

Today, corporates are increasingly relying on e-learning to improve the soft skills of their employees. Till a few years ago, soft skills training was offered only to the sales team as these skills were equated to training in communication and client interaction. But now it is a prerequisite to all categories of employees.

Soft skills are the non-technical skills, abilities and traits that one needs to function in a specific employment environment. They include four sets of workplace competencies: problem-solving and other cognitive skills; oral communication skills; personal qualities and work ethics; and interpersonal and teamwork skills.

The emerging need

With globalisation having set in, the technical personnel who till now was not exposed to the client/vendor needs to build a relationship with the client.

Increased emphasis is being laid on getting trained in working as a team, communication at the workplace and managing aggression at the workplace to reduce differences and increase productivity.

Today, soft skills are required in all functions of the workplace. Companies such as SkillSoft were born with a business model that focussed on developing e-learning content on soft skills. SkillSoft has over 1900 courses in this area.

The eight major solutions span virtually every functional area of 5000 business organisations globally.

E-learning in soft skills are available in areas such as:

- *Professional effectiveness
- *Management and leadership
- *Project effectiveness
- *Finance, HR and administration
- *Sales and customer-facing skills
- *Business strategy and operations
- *Safety and health
- *Financial services industry.

Says John Catlin, Director of SkillSoft, Asia Pacific: "Some courses are very straight forward, such as Finance. Others are "softer" or more behavioural (such as Working with Difficult People), calling for a different set of instructional presentation and practice strategies.

"Many of these courses have as much application and analysis as possible, supported by strong foundational learning at knowledge and comprehension levels. Learners are actively engaged in all levels through frequent interactivity, practice, feedback and reinforcement".

The training imparted by content providers include:

Role Play Simulation

These exercises present learners with realistic interactive simulations of everyday workplace scenarios. Role plays have multiple possible outcomes based on learners' responses to the simulation's interactions.

Simulated Dialogues

The ability to observe behaviours and their outcomes (positive and negative) is a key

strategy for teaching the professional and behavioural skills commonly termed "soft skills". The simulated dialogue strategy gives learners an opportunity to observe and listen to conversations of two or more people.

Case Studies

A case study strategy describes a complex situation, often in the form of a story, and then asks the learner to explore its characteristics and possible resolutions.

Animations

Animations are a key extension of visual designs. Animations are used when movement is an important part of the teaching point.

Audio-enabled Learning

Audio feature greatly enhances engagement and retention for many learners. Audio can be the key to the instructional effectiveness of behaviour modelling.

Job Aids

Performance support tools, termed Job Aids, complement learning and assist in the use of knowledge and skills at the workplace. Generally speaking, Job Aids can be informational, procedural, coaching guides, or decision-making assistants and are particularly useful for activities or procedures that aren't easy or practical to memorise and for refreshing knowledge previously learned but infrequently used.

Speaking with Visuals

People think in images and pictures. Instruction on "people skills" strengthened by photo-quality illustrations of people modelling the behaviours bridges the gap between human and computer interaction.

SkillSimulations

SkillSimulations extend the learning advantages of Role Play into larger, more complex experiences. SkillSimulations are expanded business simulations designed to give learners an opportunity to practice new skills in realistic work situations. Learners practice these skills by navigating through different scenarios in which they encounter a variety of business problems.

As in real life, learners have the opportunity to select different courses of action, and the scenario unfolds according to the learner's choice.

Events such as telephone calls, meetings and interruptions add to the reality of each scenario.

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