Chapter VII

Assessing the Effectiveness of E-Learning

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Abstract

This chapter presents the author’s experience with the assessment of e-learning’s effectiveness. It begins by defining e-learning, then identifies its strengths and weaknesses, and poses suggestions for enhancing e-learning’s effectiveness. The main thrust of the chapter centers upon the author’s experience as an e-learning developer and the pilot study he conducted to assess the effectiveness of an e-learning course he developed and deployed. The results of this pilot study are presented, and the author’s comments regarding the results of the pilot study are also presented. This chapter concludes with a look at the future of e-learning. The author hopes that a better understanding of e-learning’s strengths, weaknesses, and potential will enable others to develop and deploy more effective e-learning and more effective e-learning initiatives.
Introduction

Welcome to E-Learning

E-learning is a descendent of correspondence study (Miller, 2001), which traces its lineage to shorthand language courses offered in European countries as early as the 1840s (PBS Web site, retrieved 2004). Much of the existing literature states that the advent of e-learning is a paradigm shift in the development of training (Bernárdez, 2003). E-learning is a relative newcomer to the training arena, yet it already holds a noticeable share of the training market. According to the American Society for Training and Development, in 2001 e-learning accounted for 8.8% of the training market. As of 2003, e-learning has increased in its share of the training market to 10.5% (Gordon, August 2003). Many companies are seeking to utilize e-learning. During 2000 and 2001, companies poured millions of dollars into technology infrastructure, content libraries, and customized courses (Bersin, 2002).

Though e-learning is still relatively new, a lot is being said about it. In fact, it is easy to become lost in all the buzzwords and breakthroughs that are occurring in the field of e-learning. The Background section will attempt to provide a clearer view of e-learning by defining the common terms associated with e-learning, examining the strengths of e-learning and reasons for e-learning’s successes, examining the weaknesses of e-learning and reasons for e-learning’s failure, sharing recommendations regarding effective e-learning, and providing an overview of the assessment of e-learning. The main thrust of this chapter presents my initial experiences with developing and deploying e-learning as well as my first attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of e-learning. The final pages of this chapter contain a look at some predictions regarding the future of e-learning and some concluding remarks.

Background

Defining E-Learning

The terms distance education, e-learning, e-training, e-performance, computer-based training, and instructional technology can be found in
Challenges and Opportunities in the First Year of a 1:1 iPad Initiative in a High-Poverty, Highly Diverse Urban High School
