



E-Learning Needs Assessment



Purpose

There are four basic objectives for conducting an e-learning needs assessment:

- Isolate specific business challenges, problems and opportunities for which e-learning is a potential solution.
- Identify risks associated with pursuing and not pursuing e-learning.
- Determine risk management strategies that can be implemented.
- Consider possible e-learning configurations that represent potential solutions.

This needs assessment is intentionally centered on the various business issues that you will identify in question #1, and flesh out with the remaining questions. This will help you focus your e-learning initiative on core business needs, develop a strong business case, and assist you in creating a requirements document that will aid in the evaluation and selection of vendors.

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1. In your organization, what business problems or challenges exist for which e-learning is a potential solution? Also consider any unexploited business opportunities that may exist that e-learning would help your organization take advantage of or pursue.

Examples:

Challenges/Problems

Speed to market for new products; time-to-revenue
Gaps in employee skills or knowledge
Access to information, training and resources (i.e. 24x7)
Employee turnover
Time-to-competency for new employees
Increasing cost & time of training employees/travel expenses
Employees, customers and partners geographically dispersed
Management of career development and succession planning
Management of certifications and/or regulatory compliance
Sales and supply chain training

Opportunities

Increased sales opportunities
Improved sales training process
Revenue from offering training to clients and/or partners

2. What functional areas within the organization does each issue impact?
3. Identify the negative impact each challenge or problem is having on the organization and/or how the different functional areas are being effected (or how an unexploited opportunity might provide a benefit).
4. Who or what functional area “owns” each issue? (For example, who is assigned—or most likely to be assigned—to solve each problem or capitalize on an opportunity?)
5. Is the management/executive team of your organization aware of and recognize each issue?



6. Has responsibility been assigned for coming up with a solution to each issue? To who?
7. Has a timeframe been established for addressing each issue? Describe.
8. Has a budget been established for addressing each issue? Describe.
9. Prioritize the issues in terms of importance to your organization. Which issues are “high priority” versus “medium” or “low?” Why? This ranking will help you determine which issues must be solved immediately, those that can wait for a period of time, and those that might not be worth addressing at all.
10. For each issue identified as a priority (i.e. “High” and “Medium”, or however you ranked them), describe in broad terms how an e-learning solution would alleviate an organizational pain, save money or create gain.
11. Describe any e-learning/WBT solutions that currently exist within your organization (which may potentially be integrated with a larger solution, modified, expanded or fully replaced).
12. Who are the decision makers in terms of selecting, approving an e-learning solution. This is the group to whom you will have to “sell” your business case and give you access to the necessary resources (time, personnel, budget, etc.).
13. Who will be involved in implementing any proposed solutions?
14. For each e-learning solution you have identified as a priority in Question #10, consider potential risks and obstacles to each.

Examples:

No e-learning strategy defined within organization.
 Lack of funding, resources, personnel, etc.
 Lack of executive, management and/or employee support.
 Unperceived need within the organization; supporting business case has not been developed.
 Previous difficulties or failures (i.e. technical difficulties or low user rates).
 Sufficient computer and network infrastructure does not exist (hardware, software, Internet access, etc.).
 Lack of cultural readiness within the organization.
 Unsure of cost versus value (ROI).
 Difficulty in measuring results.
 Perceived quality of learning content that is available.
 Perceived difficulty of implementing and using e-learning (i.e. end-users’ computer literacy).
 Internal resistance to use e-learning versus face-to-face training.



15. Identify potential risk management strategies that could be employed to minimize the effects of the obstacles you listed in Question #14. Examples might included a phased approach to enterprise implementations, pilot programs followed up by end-user feedback or focusing on winning success with a very specific business need.
 16. How will the success of your e-learning initiative be measured? Describe the results expected and what success will look like in your organization after the e-learning initiative has been implemented.
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Planning an E-Learning Initiative: Next Steps

By completing the E-Learning Needs Assessment, you will have identified many of the elements and done a great deal of the legwork required to complete the following steps in planning and implementing an e-learning solution:

1. **Target Audience:** You now have a better understanding of who your target audience is for your e-learning solution, the business challenges they face, potential solutions, and a risk assessment of those potential solutions.
2. **Business Case:** The next step in the e-learning planning process is to develop a business case that you can use to gain management support for your solution—financial and otherwise. GeoLearning's *Building a Business Case for E-Learning* is an excellent resource to get you started.
3. **Proposed Solution:** Part of your business case will include an overview and explanation of your proposed solution, including potential risks and risk management strategies—all of which have been identified by completing the e-learning needs assessment.
4. **Business Requirements:** The next step is to identify the business requirements of your proposed solution. This will help you develop criteria to objectively evaluate different products, services and vendors, as well as develop a project plan, timeline and budget. GeoLearning's white paper titled *How to Write an RFP for E-Learning Services*, which includes a customizable RFP template, is an ideal way to begin formalizing your business requirements.
5. **Budget:** Identifying the funding, personnel and other resources that will be necessary to implement your proposed solution. This will be a key component of your business case presented to senior management.
6. **Project Plan & Timeline:** With the solution identified, you need to outline the various phases of the implementation process, assign responsibilities and identify deadlines to keep the project on track.
7. **Success Measures:** These are the results expected in your organization after the e-learning initiative has been implemented. For obvious reasons, these should be tied directly to the challenges and/or opportunities that were identified in the E-Learning Needs Assessment, but may include increased revenues and/or sales, ROI, reduced training time, cost and resource savings, reduced turnover, speed-to-market, etc.



Appendix A: Courseware Checklist

The following worksheet is designed to help you assess your organization's training needs. This particular example can be used for a technical or computer skills needs assessment. This template can be easily modified and applied to any number of topic areas (i.e. soft skills, OSHA regulations and workplace safety, finance and banking, etc.). The template can also be applied to topics and competencies that may be specific to your organization and require the development of custom courseware.

Category: Desktop Application Training					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
MS Word					
MS PowerPoint					
MS Excel					
MS Access					
MS Outlook					
MS Internet Explorer					
MS NetMeeting					
MS Project					
MS FrontPage					
Visio					
Adobe Photoshop					
Adobe Illustrator					
Crystal Reports					
Category: Web Development					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
Java					
Cold Fusion					
XML					
E-Commerce Websites					



Category: Windows 2000					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
Windows 2000 AD planning and migration					
Windows 2000 Security					
Windows 2000 Optimization and Troubleshooting					
Windows 2000 Admin Task Automation					
IIS					
SMS					
SQL Server					
Category: Oracle					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
Oracle AS					
PL/SQL					
Forms 4.5					
Reports 2000					
Designer 2000					
Data Warehouse					
Backup, Recovery & Tuning					
Category: Security					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
Intranet Security					
Disaster Recovery Planning					
PKI					
Virtual Private Networks					
Intrusion Detection Systems					
Firewalls					



Category: PC Support					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
PC Networking					
Configuration and Troubleshooting					
Category: Engineering					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
TCP/IP					
Migrating to IP V6					
Network Architectures and Protocols					
SNMP					
Data Network Design and Optimization					
Cisco Routers					
Cisco Router Troubleshooting					
OSPF, BGP					
Cisco Switches					
Voice Over IP					
Wireless Networking					
Category: SQL Server 2000					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
SQL Queries					
DTs and OLAP					



Category: Software Engineering

	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
Identifying User Requirements					
Systems Analysis and Design					
Testing					
UML					
Business Modeling					
Project Planning					
Software Quality Assurance					
Software Configuration Management					
Capability Maturity Model (CMM)					

Category: Programming

	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
C					
C++					
OOA/OOD/OOP					
COM(+)					
Visual Basic 6.0					
Visual Basic Web Development					
Visual Basic Enterprise					



Category: UNIX					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People
HP-UX Administration					
HP-UX Tools and Utilities					
HP-UX Optimization and Troubleshooting					
Shell Programming					
HP-UX Security					
Category: Other					
	Course Levels	Version	Onsite # People	Offsite # People	Online # People

