

“For Example”

An extract from 4 CrossKnowledge case studies into how embracing new learning technologies is helping to address some major HR Issues.

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Introduction

Mergers, acquisitions, international expansion, changes in business focus, innovation... In a dynamic, fast moving world, an increasing number of companies are recognising the role that new learning technologies can play in helping them to implement strategy. Today, HR are organising their skills improvement policies in-line with corporate strategy implementation recognising that a good skills improvement policy helps equip the organisation for the future.

This document shows how new learning technologies are today fulfilling a fundamental role in the everyday life of companies. Drawing on selected case studies provided by CrossKnowledge, this extract provides a brief insight on the contribution of distance-learning programmes in the ongoing process of managing change.

Extract 1 – Sanofi Aventis (“Supporting the Merger”)

Sanofi Aventis is a leading pharmaceutical group in Europe, and third largest in the world with over 100,000 employees. The merger between the two companies presented a huge challenge in terms of change management. During this period the respective HR groups often have to ‘wind down’ any training programmes until the merger has been completed, and then to launch new programmes once completed. When Sanofi and Aventis merged, the new organisation wanted to ensure a seamless transition in managing the skills and careers of their managers, and distance learning was seen as a critical component resulting in the launch of the “E campuS” distance-learning programme.

The first phase of the programme was to ensure that the content corresponded directly to the leadership development requirements of the relevant managers in the merged organisation because they would be instrumental in ensuring that the key messages for the organisation were successfully conveyed to all staff. CrossKnowledge worked closely with the HR department to ensure the compatibility of the programmes with priorities defined by the Group. In six months, a managerial training programme was successfully implemented and formed part of a comprehensive approach to skills improvement. Managers adapted the training programmes to each member of their teams and then assessed the benefits with those same colleagues against a series of performance indicators.

After a pilot phase in seven European countries, the “E campuS” method was extended to 35 countries with 86% of prescribed sessions being successfully completed. Another 1,000 managers took advantage of the programme throughout 2007. Given the programme’s success in supporting the merger, distance learning has become a key link in the company’s strategy to improve managerial skills.

Extract 2 – Lexmark (“Blended Approach to Change Management”)

Lexmark is a manufacturer and distributor of printing products and solutions in 150 countries. The beginning of this decade was a particularly tough time for the printing market. Prices for printers slumped, the market became saturated and the introduction of digital printers and multifunction products extended the range of competing products even further. Confronted by a rapidly evolving printing market, Lexmark decided to change its positioning from a “supplier of products” to a “supplier of solutions”. To negotiate this critical period, the company relied on an innovative training programme to support skills improvement among its sales staff. This situation prompted Lexmark to review its positioning, and the company decided to develop a closer working relationship with its clients to help them master the printing cycle. The objective was to help clients convey information quicker and more securely, thus ensuring better cost and infrastructure management.

With this in mind, the Lexmark HR department decided to implement a very practical training programme that combined distance learning with classroom workshops as a real ‘blended’ offering. There were two objectives for this programme: 1) to accelerate the acquisition of techniques and 2) to stimulate learners through individual programmes and participation. Since its launch among 250 managers and representatives in Europe, the programme has already convinced Lexmark’s sales teams to take the group’s new solutions-based strategy on board. A further programme was set up for managers which focused on change management. It included team leadership, coaching and staff motivation techniques. Another programme for sales staff, addressing issues such as customer relations, personal efficiency and project management, was also adopted. Upon completion of the distance-learning sessions, the classroom workshops offered a chance to put theory into practice through real case studies, along with one-to-one coaching for sales staff. In order to bring the skills of its personnel to the same level in the long term, Lexmark has decided to continue this distance-learning training programme over a period of several years. This approach should allow the alignment of practices and will help the implementation of the company’s global strategy.

Extract 3 – Schneider Electric (“International Context for e-Learning”)

As a multinational group operating in 106 countries, Schneider Electric puts training at the heart of its human resources management policies. By generalising the implementation of distance learning across all of its local sites, the industrial giant intends to increase skills and to anticipate the changes in business lines within the group.

With some 120,000 personnel, Schneider Electric holds dominant positions across the world in its fields of business. In human resources, the company uses a common frame of reference concerning jobs and skills for its distance-learning programmes, which are intended for use all around the world. Although the company generally uses an essentially decentralised management model, distance learning and all issues relating to the corporate university are managed at group level.

Schneider decided to set up a targeted training approach. Personnel are offered specific programmes in line with their profiles. For example, 400 managers have participated in a programme specifically about annual appraisal interviews. All

managers within the group can also access training through a gateway called the “Leadership Campus”. This targeted approach provides personnel with quicker access to training and allows them to assume responsibility for their own professional development.

The training programmes are designed by CrossKnowledge and the local HR department and are then centrally managed to ensure they meet on-the-ground needs. For this large international Group, new learning technologies represent a real advantage. They supply homogenous content across all countries and allow the staff involved to progress at their own pace, without taking them away from their other work for too long. The other significant advantages of distance learning are reduced access time for training, an increase in the number of subjects covered, and a reduction in overall training costs of around 30 to 40% for the same quality of training.

Extract 4 – Logica (“Corporate University for Preparing Managers”)

Logica are a prominent international player in IT services with 40,000+ staff. They have an overall goal to improve existing training programmes through “blended learning”, establishing the Logica University as a result.

One of the missions of Logica group’s university is to prepare young managers for higher management roles for which they have not always been fully prepared and trained. The university offers them a skills improvement programme focusing on managerial techniques and behaviour, combining classroom teaching and distance learning. This mix encourages interaction, and has won over the HR department as well as participants.

Logica trained more than 3,000 of its personnel at its university in 2007. Anxious to improve the quality of its programmes permanently, the university is keen to strengthen teaching efficiency and to offer further services to participants. The company therefore decided in 2005 to build distance learning into programmes intended for young consultants and engineers who had been called upon to take up management positions. Whereas the programme had previously been conducted face-to-face, it now begins with an online self-evaluation of participants’ practices, an initial step which increases the attractiveness of the scheme to learners.

Sharing and interaction is at the heart of the programme where the role of the trainer has been refocused on face-to-face teaching: experience-sharing, contextualization, role playing, and so forth. The increasing number of these exercises and simulations ensures that personnel have effectively acquired skills. Thanks to distance learning, teaching staff can create a “team building” environment more quickly because participants have already acquired theoretical knowledge. The balance between in-class learning and distance learning encourages sharing and interaction within the group, thus underpinning the “network” aspect that Logica holds dear. After regrouping, each graduating class continues to build its knowledge through a third set of distance learning sessions which assess how well they have incorporated practices and acquired knowledge.

In light of the feedback received, the university decided in 2007 to extend distance learning to other existing programmes. It is designing a new course on relationship management. The company’s training managers highlight the scope that distance

learning lends to their programmes, and participants themselves can no longer imagine being trained in any other way than through a blend of distance learning and face-to-face seminars. The programmes are more comprehensive and combine different teaching methods.

Summary

What is common in these short examples is how a blended approach is being used to align learning to business strategy, improve skills, secure high levels of engagement and deliver tangible benefits.

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NB: A full copy of this report is available on request from [CrossKnowledge](#).

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