

**User Group:**  
**Case Study: stakeholders**

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**1. Introduction and relevance of case study: user as stakeholder**

This report reflects the point of view of stakeholders related to the use and exploitation of e-learning solutions in corporate contexts. The objective of this document is to expose those points of views in a critical way and, as far as possible, translate them in recommendations useful for the Kaleidoscope community and researchers.

The relevance of this case study is closely related with the high importance of the corporate learning market for TEL industries. In accordance with the IDC reports for the Euro zone<sup>1</sup>, the current forecast of business skills training is expected for year 2006 of 9.885 Million Dollars and corporate e-learning market is expected to attract an expenditure of 1.697 Million Dollars. It means a 17 % of the total movement of capital around training in the corporate context. Corporate e-learning seems to be consolidated as a relevant part of the market for TEL industries and force them to be proactive and compete among them throughout the application of innovative solutions to gain market niches.

The point of view of stakeholders should be seen also as key clues to Kaleidoscope Network, due to the fact that these clues should become future research results demanded by TEL industries. The route is clear and this paper express the kind of suggestions to be taken into account by KAL researchers.

Before making suggestions and due that the majority of consulted sources and people and companies are coming from Spain, it is necessary to make two important remarks about the profile of Spanish companies in relationship with e-learning<sup>2</sup>:

- Companies show a slow advance in the investment in e-learning systems: just 2 out of 10 companies in Spain use blended learning and the rest of companies apply traditional face-to-face learning. A minor percentage of companies apply a mix of learning models with different resources (press, magazines and specialised books).
- About typical profile of Spanish companies using e-learning solutions: 54,4 % of the total companies applying e-learning (mainly blended learning) is that they have more than 5.000 employees.

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<sup>1</sup> European Business Skills Training market Forecast and Analysis 2001-2006 IDC, 2002  
European Corporate eLearning Market Forecast and Analysis 2003 – 2007. IDC, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Source for these remarks: Minister of Labour and Social Affaires. Study for the evaluation of the teletraining integration in Lifelong Learning programmes. Madrid, 2003

## 2. Description of case study

This *stakeholder case study* tracks points of view identified from different sources:

**IMPULSAN Association**<sup>3</sup> of e-learning users. This Association brings together e-learning practitioners mainly from private sector organisations. There is a group of 180 associated members and around 2000 people participating in IMPULSAN activities such as workshops, seminars and on line forums. This report takes the information coming from these forums<sup>4</sup> and, also, from direct consultation to founding members, practitioners linked to the Spanish Association of the APEL Association<sup>5</sup>.

**E-learning forum in elearningworkshops portal**<sup>6</sup>. This forum is an active Spanish on line community of e-learning users formed by 4.346 members. Special forum in corporate training has been monitored in order to get interesting feedbacks from stakeholders.

Direct **contributions gathered from e-learning practitioners:**

- Mr David Puente, Coordinator of elearning projects in Sadiel company<sup>7</sup> and manager of Virtual School of San Fernando Bank<sup>8</sup>
- Mr Iñigo Babot, an activist of elearning associated to INFONOMIA network<sup>9</sup>, which is focused to promote innovation in different economical sectors and throughout the integration of Information Technologies. Currently, he is making his Doctoral thesis about eLearning impacts taking as base the case of Virtual@ula of La Caixa (one of the major financial institutions in Spain)
- Mr Javier Sardiñas, an elearner practitioner from the European Centre of Companies and Innovations in Burgos (CEEI – Burgos - Spain). The case of this contribution is directly linked with the practice of an online course in setting up and running business initiatives and grouping the experience of 13 students who experienced a technological training platform and a virtual campus<sup>10</sup>
- Mr Juan Fernandez, an activist of elearning associated to INFONOMIA network<sup>11</sup>, which is focused to promote innovation in different economical sectors and throughout the integration of Information Technologies. Currently, he is making his Doctoral thesis about eLearning impacts taking as base the case of Virtual@ula of La Caixa (one of the major financial institutions in Spain)
- Mr Juan Fernandez, an e-learning practitioner from OAGER and key user (as manager, coordinator) of an experience of courses for employed or unemployed women in Salamanca, Spain. The programme has been

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.impulsan.com>

<sup>4</sup> IMPULSAN forum is based in an email list (impulsan@elistas.com)

<sup>5</sup> APEL is the Spanish Association of Industries in e- learning (<http://www.apel.es>)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.elearningworkshops.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.sadiel.es>

<sup>8</sup> <http://formacion.cajasanfernando.es>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.infonomia.com>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ceeeicampus.com>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.infonomia.com>

developed in two editions. Through out the course the 73 women have participated in the programme, received support from the program content and also tutoring to develop their business idea.

The consultation to these sources has been oriented to identify key areas of interest, expectations and critical issues related with following issues<sup>12</sup>:

- Thought and opinions about the appropriated relationship between e-learning solutions and desired results
- Easy use and management of the e-learning tools
- Kind of relationship of e-learning methods with real experiences
- Relationship of price and quality of learning experience and contents
- The quality of e-learning experience in terms of professional and personal expectations
- Capability of e-learning system to empower the worker and company

### **3. Interesting elements, highlights and conclusions**

In general, the on-line learning experience is good: it supposes an enhancement of opportunities to get new skills and also to open a new way for learning.

The critical points are related mainly with the lack of experience for transfer knowledge into appropriate results in the company and the gap among the global strategy of companies and a proportional attendance for an e-learning strategy in the company. This point of view adds critical feelings such as the learners consider themselves as part of the internal e-learning strategy of companies and, also, the inefficient model of organizations where e-learning is trying to be applied. Result?: a disappointed learning experience and a company failure in the desired action plan to accomplish business objectives.

The conclusions from stakeholders' comments and suggestions are such as follows:

#### **General gaps and barriers detected:**

- Lack of skills within the business to utilise e-learning tools
- Low validation of outputs
- Demand of manageability and reuse of resulting e-learning content
- Businesses are more concerned about how to take up the workers in a speed way to produce, than in a complete coherence of a learning model for whole company.
- Low educational value of applied e-learning tools: stakeholders feel sometime that on line training systems are just a collection of digital contents.
- Demand of underlying tools for collaborative work among learners
- Reuse of learning content from other complementary sources: stakeholders think that they are not exploiting the real power and capacity of IT networks

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<sup>12</sup> Part of this basis has been extracted from study about User acceptance of elearning systems in corporations. Analyst perspective about eLearning Authoring tools. eLearnity, 2004

- Need to have a good learning design adapted to personal user needs versus adapted to specific needs for companies in the market. Practitioners demand a balance between two scenarios.
- Required features for collaborative training environments: common goals by tasks and expected results, establish areas of common interest (project management, commercial approaches, application of procedures, usage of certain machines and devices), be adaptive in accordance with defined and multiple roles in change and tight tutoring.
- Need of powerful technical infrastructures, from enough bandwidth to enough technical support to overcome daily usage troubles
- Maintenance of certain security systems to preserve IPR and right protection over
- Pragmatism. It is a key for certain stakeholders linked with Human Resource Departments. They require results as soon as possible and e-learning system should be applied under this rule.
- Some practitioners consider e-learning a sustainable concept under suspect, due that usually it is applied as a sporadic solution.
- In accordance with last point, some practitioners claim for constructivism models in online training systems. They consider that current systems are not well oriented to learn by doing. Now, these systems are usually a collection of digital contents.

### **Action plan matters**

- E-Learners consider that systems should be adapted to skills required for efficiency in the position. Also, such systems should be conscious of the profile of skills in hand of worker and connect online training with personal careers of workers, professional projection and be connected to improvements of competitiveness of organizations (in order to be able to gain new markets and apply learned skills)
- Demand in the permanent review and adaptation of strategy into a learning work plan (with a clear direction in stages and delivery in steps)
- Build evidence and experience in parallel (by increasing understanding and trusted framework of relationship among learners and technical systems)

### **Drivers for acceptance**

- Practitioners suggest that e-learning in corporation will pave the way throughout the support to decision makers in relationship with operational costs, alignment with financial statements, reward system and how to measure and manage learner motivation
- Also, these decision makers, as e-learning stakeholders, think that an appropriated regulation and grants should support to integrate e-learning programmes. Also, trends and competence movements in favour to e-learning initiatives should become factors to be taken into account.

### **Organisational factors**

- Effectiveness depending of learning culture: it is a common ideal that just companies with a minimum background in e-learning should be able to be empowered by e-learning programmes
- Claim from practitioners about the need to maintain a minimum level of positive and proactive attitudes about the internal e-learning programmes, from top managers to lower-scale workers. It supposes that company should

be aware that an ideal working environment should be synonymous of lack of risks of interruption and suitability of physical access to learning resources.

### **About content demand**

- User demand a quality control about content delivered throughout e-learning systems. Practitioners demand a kind of any regulated system at European level for this purpose.

### **Technological solutions**

- Stakeholders as Practitioners feel that e-learning providers do not apply innovation. The evolution of LMS and, in general Technology to Enhance Learning is progressing just under demand. It supposes that a high demand of certain tools or solutions should exist previously in order to force the desired evolution. An evidence of interest and demand for advances solutions exists but it is not still available now.