Learning and development teams across the globe are charged with keeping e-learning relevant, fluid and seamless. At the turn of the millennium when e-learning was introduced in the workplace, human resources managers did not have any templates or blueprints for how to set up and manage an e-learning development process. They did it anyway and today, e-learning has evolved beyond what they did.

So how, you would ask, should you implement e-learning in your organisation?

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**What is an E-learning Development Process?**

When an organisation realises that skills or knowledge gaps have arisen within its workforce, e-learning is usually the next stop; to cover the gaps with the most efficient method possible. The e-learning process is the set of stages that you go through to close knowledge and skills gaps found, through an online learning system within the workplace. Most organisations adopt a learning management system or LMS (Learning Management Systems) to host their e-learning programmes.

**Stages of an E-learning Development Process**

Once the decision to embark on an e-learning programme or adopt an e-learning system has been made, it is important to put a plan together to guide the process. Below are the steps needed to achieve this:

**Stage 1: Analysis**

Before you start to make any changes or adopt a particular e-learning structure, it is necessary to analyse what the learning needs and requirements are. Research needs to be done to gather the necessary information to inform the process, beginning internally to identify learning needs.

Information on external requirements including industry certification standards and requirements and other requisite criteria for staff need to also be sought and put into consideration. The scope of this research will depend on factors such as the nature and size of your organisation, the industry in which it operates, the existing knowledge base and skill base of your workforce and the type of products or services that you deliver.

It is apparent that with the dynamism and speed at which technology drives our world and the operations of businesses, even the most basic businesses or organisations, still require some technology-based learning from time to time.

**Stage 2: Programme Objectives**

Goal setting is key in any process because it measures achievement and also lets you know when effort has produced desired results.

Your core goals in designing an e-learning program need to be spelt out. What does the programme aim to fulfil? What problems need to be solved? What is the impact of implementing the programme? How will the impact or benefits of the e-learning programme be measured? These are core questions that need to be addressed.

This stage in the progress sets up what to expect from the programme and supports the building of the framework for this. The research from the previous stage will help you get this done.

**Stage 3: Project Plan**

Develop an e-learning plan by liaising with relevant operational teams, and inculcating key information and other resources needed to achieve the objectives set in the previous stage. It is at this stage that the requirements and procedures for setting up the e-learning programmes are organised and documented along with key performance indicators for testing the programme’s efficacy.

Internal and external partners such as the LMS solutions provider, or external development company, project manager, and departmental representatives are also selected or shortlisted at this stage.

Duties and responsibilities, reporting lines, the scope of work, schedule of execution and other structural details will also be put into the plan to ensure that conflicts are prevented.

**Stage 4: Content Building and Strategy**

Now, it's time to decide on the content of the courses within the programme.

Start with the different courses or modules to be included and provide learning objectives for each of them to help you measure whether the modules are effective.

Next, break them down into topics and sub-topics that will build up to these learning objectives. Your earlier research will help ensure that every necessary element is covered, and nothing is left out.

Maintain records of source materials used so that this will be available if changes need to be made to the content at a later stage.

Decisions made at this stage connect with those related to the technical and technological assets that will support the e-learning programme and ensure it is compliant with the technical standard that you will use for your LMS i.e., SCORM or xAPI.

**Stage 5: Storyboard Design**

With e-learning, your content cannot be all wordy; your learners will get bored and completion rates will be low. To keep your courses engaging and promote high participation and completion rates, aim at a balance between audio, visual and text.

The idea is to use storytelling, a logical progression that sets the scene, introduces concepts, explains them, presents scenarios, examples and samples, and breaks down the meat of the matter. A critical aspect of the process, storyboarding can make or break the effectiveness of your entire e-learning programme.

It is also quite key at this stage to consider and incorporate considerations for learning difficulties and disabilities that learners may have so that the design of the content is suitable for the learning needs of all learners.

The following features should be considered and integrated where possible into your content:

* Captions and on-screen text
* Background music and sound effects
* Images, graphics, animations and videos
* Interactive functions
* Audio narration
* Assessment and remediation
* Scoring and feedback mechanisms
* Progression

With these, you set out the narrative and assets required for each course, topic and sub-topic and how they relate and interact.

Stage 6: Prototype Development of E-learning Courses

At this stage, all the elements of your storyboard will emerge as prototypes of the courses within the e-learning programme. The technical team or your developers can now bring to life your drafts and ideas about how the courses should look, feel and be experienced.