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L&D Excellence:

The Ultimate Guide for Introducing Digital Language Training in Your Company



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Enterprise

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	Page 2
2. The Right Language Training Concept	Page 4
3. Planning	Page 9
4. Implementation	Page 11
4.1. Onboarding	
4.2. Internal Marketing & Communication	
4.3. Learning Goals and Management's Role	
4.4. Framework & Learning Culture	
5. Measuring and Evaluating Success	Page 16



“Our society is undergoing a fundamental change that will also cause long-term, permanent change, particularly in the professional world”

1. Globalisation:

Globalisation appears to be undergoing a radical change. The McKinsey Global Institute came to this conclusion via a study conducted early in the year. In light of rapidly changing barriers to trade, the increasing significance of services and ongoing digitalisation, “hybrid companies—meaning companies without clearly delineated structures in terms of location and staff—develop, and are increasingly losing their national roots and truly evolving into global companies in order to provide services for local customers in a decentralized manner.”

2. Digitalisation:

Ongoing digitalisation changes the professional world in various ways: new business models and competition structures develop, work content and the organisation of production and work processes will also change.

3. New Work:

Since our society is transitioning from an industrialised society to a knowledge-based one, the professional world is being confronted with shifting values. In particular, traditional, hierar-

chical work structures are undergoing change and switching increasingly toward newer, more flexible ideas.

These changes have a large influence on the manner in which we work. Globalisation means that international communication will be crucial in the future. Digitalisation, on the other hand, also has a large influence on how companies will work and learn in the future—in both regards, digital content will increase in importance.

At the same time, digitalisation is still uncharted territory for many companies, and anything new tends to raise concerns. How big is the change? How many resources need to be invested?

These are both typical reservations and concerns that companies have regarding the topic of digital learning.

In order to address these concerns and convince you that the switch to digital learning is, in principle, not all that difficult, we have created this comprehensive guide that should help you to implement digital language training from start to finish. We hope you have a lot of fun reading it and that your personal implementation is a success.



2. The Right Language Training Concept

Especially for the export-heavy, globally operating economies, the language skills of employees—both when dealing with customers and for internal communication—are an important factor for success.

Based on experience, reliable communication in customers' native language—especially for sales and customer service—has a positive influence on business success and can also help secure new target markets.

Nowadays, communication also plays a central role within the company. Especially for multi-national companies, reliable communication between departments and at various sites reduces friction and improves business processes. Within project teams, communication can increase cooperation, reduce misunderstandings, and thus increase the efficacy of project work. At the

employee level, reliable use of language can alleviate worries and inhibitions, especially in terms of communication in a foreign language.

2/3

of all companies offer
language training to their employees

Like any skill within a company, language skills among employees must be fostered and developed in order to be able to meet the company's needs.

So far, so good. Your company is on board and wants to begin offering language training to your employees immediately. Before you begin your search for the first available vendor, it is worth your time to address a few fundamental questions.



1. Which focus groups within your company should be addressed with language training?

First, you should consider whether your company would like to offer language training to all employees, or only for certain departments or target groups. Depending on your company's needs and strategies, it may suffice to only provide training to employees with concrete customer contact, such as sales or customer service. Using this mindset, both the target training groups

and the learning needs become clearer, and may be covered fully by classroom training.

Things are different, however, if you would like to offer language training to all of your company's employees. This means your target group is larger and the learning needs are more heterogeneous, meaning that a training concept based

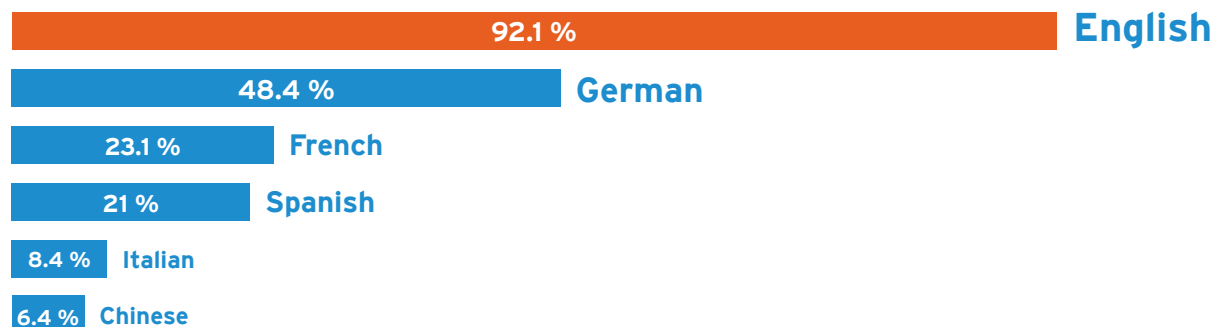
purely on classroom training in a seminar room may fall short. For companies with hundreds or thousands of employees, there is truly no way around eLearning-based language training.



2. Which languages should you offer?

Naturally, the most important language for international business relationships is and remains English, which is why English is by far the most commonly offered language. Other languages, on the other hand, are best suited to particular departments or employees in order to address concrete business needs.

Which languages are trained most often in companies in Europe?



Source: eLearning BENCHMARKING Study 2019

3. Which linguistic competencies should be trained?

Roughly speaking, mastery of a language comprises 6 aspects: speaking, writing, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, grammar and vocabulary. For a comprehensive training concept, all six aspects should ideally be taken into account and trained, allowing the learner to achieve as comprehensive a mastery of the language as possible. At the same time, this approach is time- and labor-intensive and may not always be necessary.

Depending on learning needs and target groups, it may suffice to only provide training and development of particular aspects. For call center employees, it may suffice to train verbal linguistic competencies, meaning speaking and listening comprehension, so that they can communicate reliably with customers on the telephone.



4. Blended Learning - "The Best of Both Worlds"

Historically, one of the greatest challenges of training was the time component. If a company decided to use face-to-face language training, then a course would have to be scheduled for multiple participants, who would all need to be available at the same time. This time constraint is not an issue for digital solutions, meaning that employees can decide for themselves when they have time for training. This flexibility can also have a positive effect on motivation, since employees do not have to attend a course feeling as if they would rather be devoting their time to an important project. This allows the learner to adjust study time to his or her work schedule. The greater control over their own learning process is also motivational, since a digital solution allows employees to self-guide their training and work at their own learning pace. This prevents them from becoming discouraged because they feel that others are catching on more quickly. This is because the individual results of each learner are the focus.

Learners can also freely choose where they study. Employees can train at work or at home, without having to travel to a language school. Likewise, there is no need to book a meeting room for an instructor. All of these factors mesh much better

with new attitudes toward life and work that the "New Work" movement has established within companies. Learning a language is no longer a burden, but rather a meaningful benefit program. This flexibility yields markedly better motivation for pursuing learning goals, even in the long term.

50%

of all companies with digital language training rely on the Blended Learning approach

Another flexibility factor applies to the content itself: generally speaking, standardised books depicted the status quo, meaning every learner was presented with the same content. This approach has fallen out of fashion, since not every employee needs the same skill set, scenarios or vocabulary. A sales employee has a different focus than the head of marketing. Digital methods can meet these individual needs.

Naturally, traditional methods also have their advantages—they are, however, no longer the only methods that boast these benefits. Some digital language training solutions use a "Blended Learning" approach to bring the advantages of class-

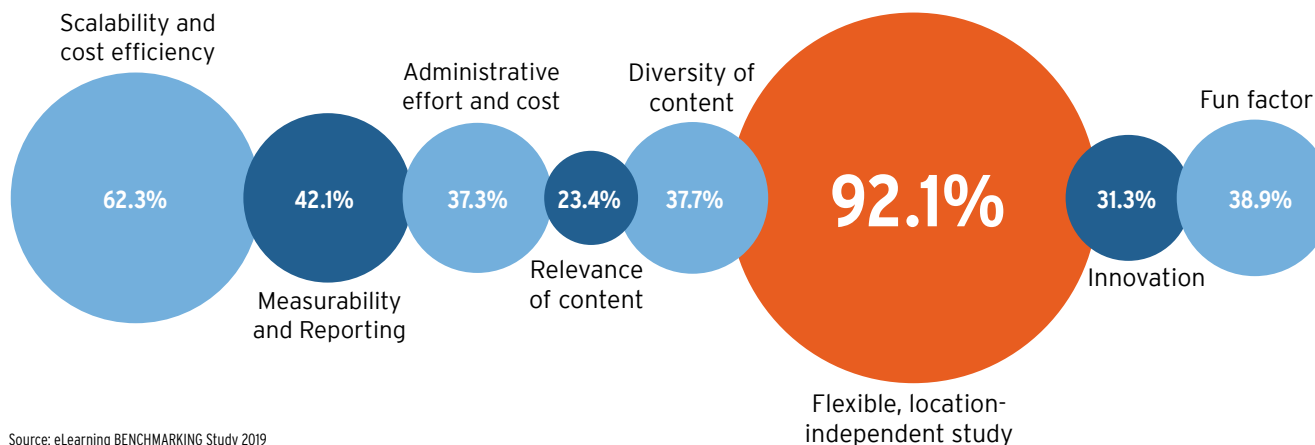
Face-to-Face Digital

room training into the digital age. In particular, the aspect of "face-to-face" language training plays a central role in this context. Naturally, direct exchange with an instructor or tutor is and remains essential in order to address the learner's questions quickly and to use expressions and vocabulary immediately.

Video technology, however, can also allow learners to experience this exchange within a digital

classroom, at any time and from anywhere, as with the rest of their digital learning experience. In addition, they can address linguistic weaknesses with an instructor in a targeted manner and work on their desired competence key points. They can speak as much as they wish and play through both professional and everyday scenarios. And all of this can be integrated into their digital language learning course that has been tailored to their needs.

Advantages of eLearning compared to in-person training



Source: eLearning BENCHMARKING Study 2019



Considerations have been made, and now the next step is to begin the planning phase for implementing language training in your company. For this case, let's assume that the company wants to provide digital English language training to all of its employees. In order to offer the best curriculum, you would like to work with an estab-

lished language training vendor. There are dozens of vendors on the market who could all offer more or less comprehensive solutions for companies. In order to find a suitable project partner among these many options, you should perform a needs analysis with "Must Haves" and "Nice to Haves."

The 10 Most Important Questions Before Implementing Language Training

- ➔ Which skills (reading, writing, etc.) should be trained comprehensively?
- ➔ How comprehensive should the curriculum be?
- ➔ Is the learning content also compatible with mobile end devices? Is there a native app?
- ➔ Is there a virtual classroom or other comparable software?
- ➔ How user-friendly is the curriculum?
- ➔ Are there personal tutors for learners?
- ➔ How interactive and appealing is the content?
- ➔ What impression does the vendor make? Does the vendor already have experience with your industry?
- ➔ Can the solution be integrated easily and smoothly into your system infrastructure?
- ➔ Which monitoring and reporting options are available (namely measurability/KPIs)?



Success Factor Stakeholder Management

Complementary to the needs analysis, you should also attempt to identify and proactively manage any hindrances or stumbling blocks at an early stage. In addition to legal questions and technical hurdles, stakeholder management can play a critical role in success. When implementing digital language training, especially if that training is meant to target all of a company's employees, a number of actors and departments are directly

or indirectly affected. For that reason, you should identify the relevant stakeholders and express and define their wishes, needs and concerns as early as possible.

For long-term success, it is particularly important to adapt learning goals to strategic business goals and to involve **senior directors and management**. Much too often, projects fail because companies

see language training as a surefire success and assume that employees will find a way to get it done. In order for language training to be used actively by employees and to constitute a benefit, a company also needs to establish a suitable framework and make a few adjustments to the learning culture. Generally speaking, this only succeeds if the measures are truly supported by management.



4. Implementation

The planning phase has been completed successfully and, after a thorough selection process, a suitable language training solution was identified and integrated into your system landscape. As of now, every employee can access language training via the company's own learning management system and, after a brief evaluation test, can refresh or develop their English knowledge based on his or her own level of linguistic competence. Mission accomplished, project complete?

Internal Marketing

In theory, you could respond to this question in the affirmative, but in practical terms, the newly introduced language training will likely fail over the medium or long term without accompanying marketing and communication measures. In order for employees to truly make use of the new training options, it is important to orient them with an **onboarding process** and support them as they begin digital language training, as well as inspire them to use a particular **communication strategy** throughout the process. In addition, it is also important to define clear, binding **learning goals** with management and to establish a suitable framework.



Just before rolling out language training, employees should be informed and provided with teasers about the upcoming language training via email or another information channel. Before the start date, it is recommended that you organise an in-person or digital "Learner Kick-Off". A member of HR or ideally management should be involved with this kick-off event in order to explain to employees the benefits of the new language training:

- Why is the company investing in language training?
- What expectations does the company associate with language training and what are the company's expectations for learners?
- What is the benefit or added value of language training for employees and their careers?

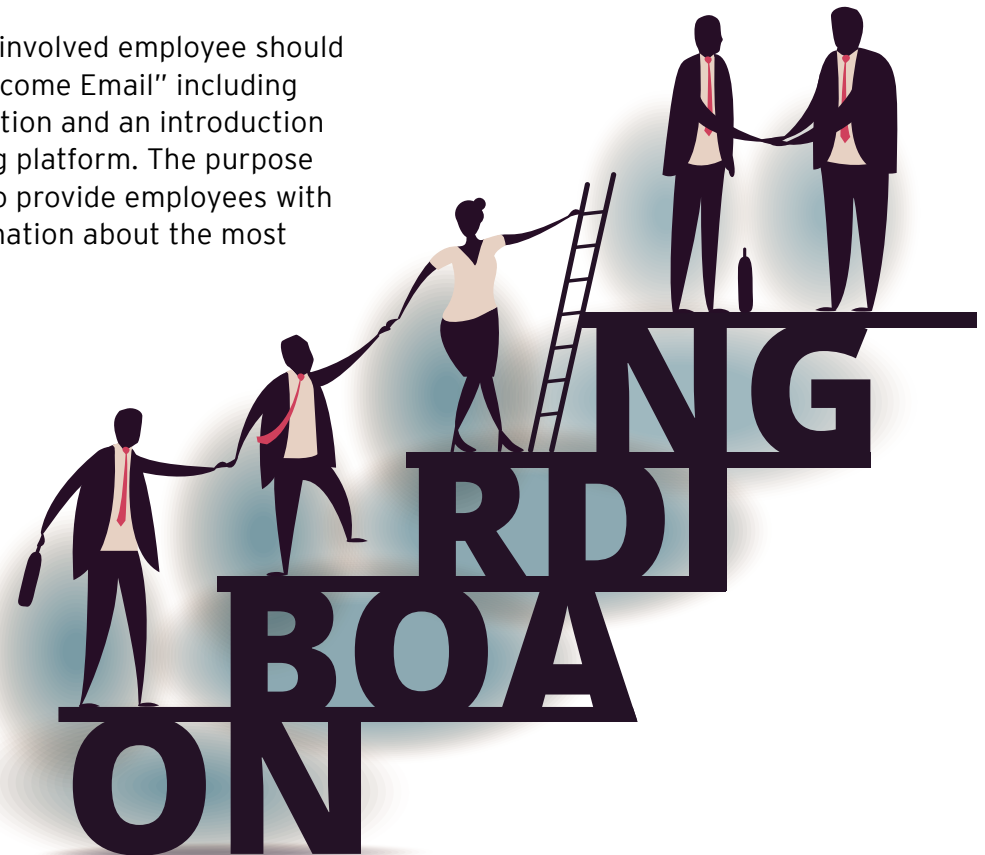
These questions and others should be addressed during the kick-off event in order to inform employees of the company's intentions and expectations from the very start, and to highlight the benefits and opportunities for their own professional development. This allows questions, fears

and resistance among employees to be addressed upfront and increases acceptance for language training.

Welcome Email

After the kick-off, each involved employee should receive a personal "Welcome Email" including his or her login information and an introduction to the language training platform. The purpose of this introduction is to provide employees with concise, relevant information about the most

important functions and thus to facilitate the introduction to and use of language training. As an alternative or complement to an email, a brief learning video to visualise the functions can also be provided.

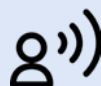


In order to inform the workforce and raise awareness of the kick-off event for the upcoming new language training, it is recommended that you run a concurrent marketing and communication campaign. The precise structure and scope of this campaign can vary widely and differs from company to company. Fundamentally, there are numerous measures that can be implemented in this campaign based on your company's needs and intentions with regard to communication.

Regular communication is crucial

Regardless of the measures you eventually choose, the goal of the marketing and communication strategy is to provide employees with comprehensive information about the roll-out of language training and to keep the topic relevant over the medium and long term via regular updates.

Example Internal Communication Measures



Word-of-Mouth marketing

(e.g., via HR employees or management)



Posters and/or information booths in the workplace

(for a limited period of time)



Competitions



Regular mailings/newsletter contributions



One-pagers/brochures tailored to the individual company

(or similar informational material)



Informational webinars with managers or leadership



Contributions or reports of experiences from learners within your own company

(e.g., how, in concrete terms, they used their new linguistic knowledge domestically or abroad)



Preparing studies on the advantages/added value of linguistic competence for employees

4.3. Learning Goals and Management's Role

As with other learning needs, when introducing language training, it is essential that managers seek out personal discussion with their employees in order to communicate the company's expectations, cooperate to define binding goals and offer themselves as communication partners in the event of questions or issues. In this context, it is important not only to express the company's expectations in terms of language acquisition, but also to address employee expect-

tations in parallel. This should lead to defining clear, realistic learning goals in cooperation with one another. In order to define these goals, you can orient yourself using the "SMART Formula."

Milestone Planning

In addition to agreeing upon learning goals, both parties should also cooperate to draft a milestone plan that establishes binding deadlines and sets

dates for learning goals for both sides. In addition, active interest from management or direct supervisors and support with questions or problems has positive effects on acceptance among employees.

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= **Specific** = The goals must be formulated clearly and unambiguously

= **Measurable** = The goals must be measurable

= **Attractive** = The goals must be desirable or attractive to employees

= **Realistic** = The goals must be achievable and feasible

= **Time-bound** = The goals need to have a deadline

"Binding goals between employees and management increase learning success"

In order for employees to benefit from the new language training and be able to meet their learning goals, the company must establish a corresponding framework. Within this context, one important aspect is learning time, since the best training options are not particularly useful if employees have no opportunity to use it actively.

Self-guided learning time

For example, a company can establish self-guided learning times, wherein each employee can freely allocate a certain amount of time during their regular work week for language training. Theoretically, this allows employees to make use of language training independently and in coordination with their work duties. In order for this sort of model to

work in practice, employees must actually be able to invest time. If work is always the priority and no importance is placed upon learning time, particularly by supervisors, then this form of language training is doomed to fail. On the other hand, if employees are allowed to train outside of work hours, you must establish clear regulations regarding whether and how off-the-clock training time will be compensated as work time.

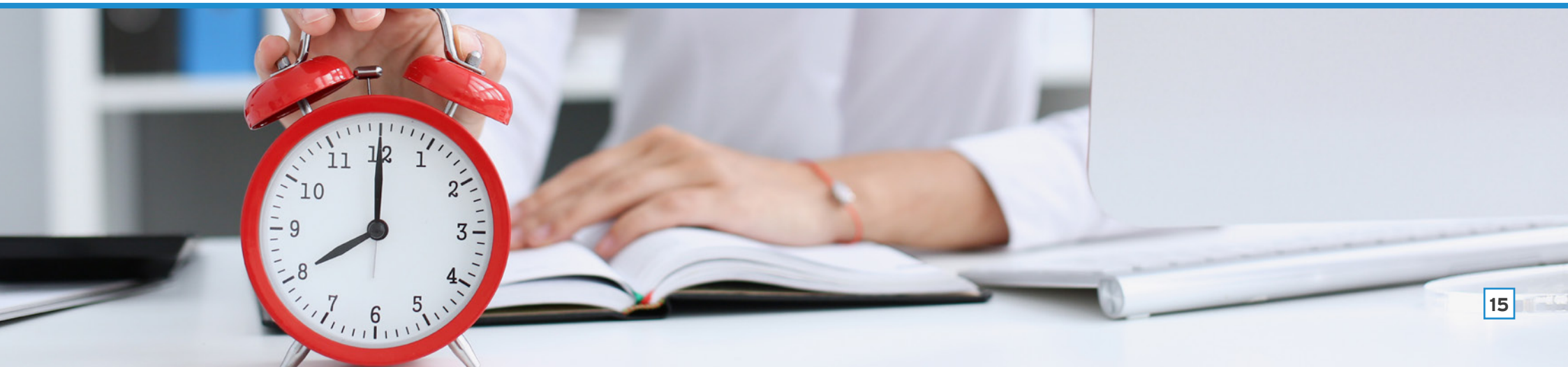
Learning locations

The learning locations provided are another determining factor. In most companies, not every employee has access to their own desktop PC, which would allow digital language training to be accessed without any special effort. Employees

in production, for example, often do not have this option available to them. Particularly for these types of target groups, corresponding EDP spaces or learning areas should be established, which can be used or booked independently by employees or in agreement with management.

Incentives

In addition, it may be worthwhile for companies to consider motivational incentives. For example, employees could be granted a reward for achieving their learning goals (e.g., coupons for the cafeteria, additional holidays, etc.), or playful elements such as scoreboards could be used.



5. Measuring and Evaluating Success

The implementation phase has been completed and language training has now been in effect successfully for several months. Things are back to normal. At this point, it is worthwhile to reflect and compare the actual situation with your goals. After all, comprehensive monitoring and reporting options are among the greatest advantages of digital learning solutions. Generally speaking, a large quantity of aggregated usage data, such as access numbers or completion/cancellation rates can be collected and reviewed without any special effort.

In addition, it is worth your time to collect feedback from employees/learners as well as their supervisors, especially during the initial period. Employee surveys can be used to establish an understanding of their satisfaction with the language training that has been introduced and to learn what works and, especially, what doesn't work based on user feedback. Complementary feedback from management can provide you with insight into whether the predefined learning goals are truly being achieved by means of the language

solution, or whether management can determine an increase in reliable communication and willingness to communicate among their employees.

Defining the Correct Goals

Assessing whether the introduction to digital language training was successful often depends on the expectations and project goals that were originally defined. A goal such as "all company employees should achieve level C1 English competence within one year" is doomed to fail from the start. However, if employees are still actively using language training months after rollout, continue to slowly but surely develop their professional linguistic competence and their foreign language communication has improved overall, then the introduction of language training was, in all practical senses, a success.



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