

SELLING E-LEARNING

E-learning is playing an increasingly important part in workplace training and development. Iain McCormick explains the steps to take to sell it in your organisation.

E-learning is one of the greatest things that has happened in the learning field for decades. Yet how does an HR manager sell it to his or her senior management team?

The process of selling should consist of the following steps:

1. Communicate the benefits such as cost savings, increased efficiency, greater learner control, better impact on learners and reduced time in training. Many of the cost savings can be seen in the chart below which contrasts the classroom development process with e-learning deployment. The cost savings are greatest for organisations which are larger so the e-learning sessions are used many more times, and for those that are geographically distributed where travel cost savings can be considerable.

2. Communicate a simple, clear concept. E-learning has its share of jargon, but rather than using this, place an emphasis on how practical challenges, such as better customer service, can be achieved through e-learning deployment.

3. Set out the industry trends. According to the *Learning Circuits* Annual Trends Survey, e-learning is now being used for a wide range of topics. A 2004 study on e-learning use rated IT (end-user and desktop applications) the highest with 38 percent of respondents, followed closely by general business skills (35.7 percent)—covering a

wide range of topics such as leadership training, sexual harassment training and diversity training. Customer service training and task-specific skills tied for third at 30.4 percent. (www.learningcircuits.org/2004/nov2004/LC_Trends_2004.htm)

4. Find success stories like that of Cisco Systems, a worldwide leader in networking for the internet. Data shows the ROI for e-learning internally at Cisco is 900 percent per course—for every dollar it spent on e-learning, the company saw a \$9 gain in productivity. Course participants, asked about time savings and quality improvement since taking an e-learning course, reported a 24 percent increase in efficiency, on average (see www.elc.org.sg/successInfo1.asp). On the local scene TalkTactics is a highly successful e-learning provider who has a range of success stories to tell (see www.talktactics.com/).

To effectively sell e-learning, HR practitioners need to understand the perspective of the senior management team and use their language. This means explaining e-learning clearly, demonstrating its benefits, showing the trends to greater use of e-learning in a wide range of topics, and sharing a range of success stories.

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Classroom deployment	E-Learning deployment
Facility costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Room rental or overhead allocation Refreshments Training materials Teaching aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incremental desktop computer costs Web-enabled learning management system costs Course development costs Learner costs, including time away from work Management information system support Hosting costs (if any)
Instructor costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor salary and benefits (if internal) Instructor fee (if contracted) Travel and meals 	
Learner costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time away from workplace Replacement labour Travel and living 	
Course development costs	

See <http://www.learningcircuits.org/2002/feb2002/moran.htm>