The Internet as a Natural Environment for Online Training: Understanding Online Management and Social Media in the Workplace

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Abstract—the aim of the article is to present the Internet in the context of using it in online vocational training and e-management in the workplace and also to draw attention to its major benefit which is the speed and effectiveness of bilateral and multilateral communication.

Index Terms—B2E, Bureau online, E-management, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a medium which enables bilateral communication and allows creating “to and from” channels of information. In this way you can quickly and easily strike up a conversation with the addressees, connected both with managers and workers (employees). Nowadays the essential elements of an educational - training interactive environment are interactive objects which make bilateral communication among managers and staff to be trained as is the case of new workers or continuing training programmes.

Interactivity is a constant and obvious feature of the possibilities of the Internet. This feature is claimed to be the key one if one wants to understand differences in comparison with other traditional channels of communication. Due to possibilities offered by technology to design websites, the user is not passive any longer. The interactivity itself does not only concern the tools and ways how to interact, it is a multidimensional process consisting of several components complementing one another. This means that the tools and technology are just a part of “full interactivity”.

II. THE INTERNET AND MANAGERS

Because of enormous technological dynamics in the Internet the range of interactive tools is becoming wider and wider and managers are always looking for new tools (free or sharewares) to built a good online environment to search, share or give information not only to customers but also to use in the workplace. The social media that can take many different forms, including Network services, Internet forums, chat rooms, web logs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video have more and more significance for its friendly environment, cheap cost and wide use. In this paper we will concentrate in the following tools: websites, e-mail service, online-forms, chat-rooms, forums, questionnaires and surveys.

A. Network Service

The simplest and most basic tool which makes conducting e-training possible is the network service. The WWW Service, when it is to carry out the role of communication, should include some interesting content for particular addressees. A properly built website may become the most effective business card and a place where new staff can learn about goals and general strategies of the company.

One of the advantages of the Internet service (a website) is the fact that we can promote our brand using relatively little expenditure, which is undoubtedly the greatest benefit of each Internet website. Webpage is also the means of direct communication with the participants of E-training. It helps to create a corporate image easily and its bond with the surroundings, short-term and planned contacts between workers and trainers.

If one wants to build a webpage for training purposes, one should precisely define the tasks which the page is to meet. Form, layout and content will depend on these aims. From the point of view of an E-trainer an internet page may constitute three functions:

- Promotional tool
- Educational platform
- E-business tool

Each of these can be supported with internet management activities.

The priority factor is always readability and easiness in web navigation. It is also important to select the content carefully and properly so that it is useful for addressees. One should also be aware that both the shortage and excess of information may cause the page unattractive and boring or irritating and even user-unfriendly.

Although most websites created by E-Trainers contain some constant components they serve various purposes. One of the former is the home page which visually presents the profile of a company in a readable and attractive way and is also an entry point to web navigation. Apart from this, such a web page provides a detailed description of E-trainers, their backgrounds,
general offer and personal data such as addresses, phone numbers and e-mails.

The above description refers to rather minimalist version of a E-trainer’s web-page.

In an extended version such a website should be enriched with some extra information and tools. And thus it may contain the following items: price lists of guaranteed services, information about cooperating entities, reference letters, search engine, a map of the service, the table of contents (with a short description of each page) and a brief summary of the area in which the company works.

In E-training a great facility is a newsletter which makes the access to information easier and can be modified to meet the needs of particular target groups (discussion groups) through emailing system, and thus creating the newsletter strictly adjusted to the needs and expectations of various groups of addressees.

Possibility of online registering and adjusting the site to individual needs is important to build relations of website users for the needs E-trainers from the educational E-centre. A part of the website can be exclusively accessible to specifically defined addressees.

What additionally strengthens the bonds between the manager and the exclusive addressees and makes it possible to affect these people is the fact that they have easy access to the part of the company service. It is possible to analyse people’s behaviour and to estimate their needs having observed them while surfing the company’s website.

Users’ registration (connected with passing personal data) and personalizing the website allows the very selective message directed to required people. In case of many company websites such registration is demanded by for example trainers. Then they are allowed to perform some extra functionalities which are not available to average users of such a service.

Typical section for the managers-trainers should contain a system enabling publishing and distribution of lectures and exercises, archive materials and tools that would let direct contact with other participants.

**B. E-mail**

The basic interactive tool making “to and from” communication possible is up-to-date e-mail address to all responsible for particular aspects of E-training activities. To E-mail addresses one may add some other ways to contact with particular workers, for example:

- IDs of Internet communicators’ (Tlen, Yahoo, MSN Messenger)
- IDs of VoIP applications’ (Gadu-Gadu Skype, Flash Phone)

Such pieces of information indicate openness of the E-trainer and suggest the users of a website that workers are ready to contact with all interested people.

**C. Forum**

Another tool which allows efficient communication with the service users is a forum, where workers may express their opinions on various or chosen topics. When such a forum is properly run and moderated it may also serve as a great tool to build a kind of society around E-trainers, which may perfectly work together with the managers training purposes, such as creating the image of infrastructure of a company.

**D. Questionnaires and surveys**

Communication with workers is made also possible by other typical tools such as questionnaires and surveys. Due to these tools service users can express their opinions concerning many important matters referring to company procedures, content, forms of control, access to various sources, etc.

**E. Forms on a webpage**

Another basic interactive feature which allows easy bilateral communication is forms on a webpage. They make it possible to include some remarks which are passed to people in charge or are displayed on the webpage. It is worth remembering that this form of “to and from” communication should be available rather for those users who are registered.

**F. Chat-rooms**

A chat-room is a more advanced communication tool and managers can simultaneously talk to invited guests, experts and exchange views or carry consultations concerning supervised work, training programme and daily work.

**III. THE INTERNET AS A TOOL TO EXTEND TRADITIONAL TRAINING INFRASTRUCTURE.**

Managers and staff of a company use media monitoring that involve precise searching, processing and analyzing all possible information available in the press, on the radio, TV and the Internet connected with the strictly defined needs of the company, other institution or person.

Due to constant development of network software the results of media monitoring are presented by advanced services. The best of them are special IT tools which enable not only browsing but also an immediate analysis of received information and also quick communication and media monitoring.

**A. Stages**

It must follow subsequent stages:

- Gathering information which is in the area of interest of an E-training programme from the media,
- Preliminary analysis whether it is useful and reliable
• Further analysis on the basis of which daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, half-annual and annual reports are taken.

They help to draw appropriate conclusions and to make plans and keep control, and to adjust the current plans and strategic training purposes of a company, department, section or worker’s needs.

Thus media monitoring as a work tool plays several significant roles depending on the person using it.

B. Application

As a result of the monitoring users are provided with a set of vital information which is used to:

• Analyze the image of E-trainer and its competitors
• Follow educational tendencies
• Follow chances and dangers arousing from the outer surroundings
• Assess the media output
• Train / educate

IV. The Internet as a Basic Management Centre in E-Training: online office

One does not have to be convinced that being online gives the feeling of having a kind of power. As it appears relatively few companies and institutions are able to skillfully use the possibilities that internet gives. Combining Management with the Internet allowed to give many classical tools entirely new shape form. The simplest and at the same time the most expressive example is online bureau or online worker centre help.

Research shows that most staff in their everyday work rely on information taken from the Internet. Simplicity and quickness of the access to information plays the key role here. Analysts agree that taking actions in the area of media relations while using the power of the Internet is becoming the most effective form of communication nowadays. Thus online bureaus (online centre help) play more and more significant role in multidirectional communication. Those who are interested will find there some pieces of information such as: programs, sources, documents, photos, various training materials, multimedia files presenting the greatest achievements and other tools supporting individual staff’s works.

The most often mentioned tools include: RSS channels, multimedia network communicators, streaming video or wire-service (a system distributing source information).

A well-organized online office allows individual and personalized communication with participants of training process. The most important advantages of such a solution are unlimited twenty-four-hour access to the most significant information and a quick possibility to update the content.

A. Functionality

An online office is also designed for trainers who have the possibility to multiply the message they want to send. That is why if it is to be effective, it must be designed in some other way than the other part of the service.

A good online help centre should be equipped with a device which lets entire search of the content of all sources of information and downloading them as files. It should also provide access to reports, ready-made summaries, graphics, logotypes and photos.

B. Effectiveness

Technologically advanced online offices are first of all the equipment for the workers of online help centres provided with tools enabling them to communicate with participants of the training process.

It resembles a kind of traditional postal service which makes it possible to exchange messages with trainers taking into account personalization and individualization of the message and options such as sending information with time embargo or monitoring information campaign. However the online help centre is not only a tool for individual communication. Nevertheless, the Internet gives us also an opportunity for mass communication. It is therefore inevitable to support the application with the wire-service (a system distributing source information). Putting into practice such a solution guarantees fast entrance with information to the editorial systems and directly to the other www pages, too.

C. Multimedia

A good online office should immediately respond to current needs of users which are changing together with the access to much more advanced solutions in technology and multimedia. It is worth remembering to keep the office up-to-date. Sound files (so called podcasts) and video files are more and more often used as novelties. Podcasts may enrich each piece of information with sound materials, for example with opinions of managers, trainers and other people invited to cooperate.

Various video materials are gaining more and more popularity. According to a marketer.com online video files have great potential as a channel for passing information. 61% of Americans watching video files search for current affairs. In response to such a demand, for example since September, this year netPR.pl service has decided to introduce video equipment to its online bureaus.

D. Restrictions on online offices

Despite the whole range of advantages and unique possibilities offered by online offices one should remember as it is in case of each solution, they also have restrictions. One should bear in mind the following:

For certain groups of internauts the problem may be surfing the Internet in a skilful way, using links, using several windows at the same time or fast typing. Others may have problems with sudden logging off or switching the user. Low rate of internauts in general, old or too slow computers, low link capacity. In case of those who use the dial-up service the cost of being online may become a problem.
E. The future of online offices

One can speculate about the future of online offices. On thing is for sure, as the time goes by they are becoming better and better.

The feature of the Internet is the dynamics resulting from the changing surroundings and new technologies. Therefore one should expect that new tools improving communication in various areas of education will appear.

They will definitely be as follows: technologies that make organizing online scientific conferences possible and their integration with companies websites, and properly working systems that manage the relations between workers and trainers. These will surely integrate data and information deriving from a lot of systems but also simplify training procedures.

V. CONCLUSIONS

As the following two: providing reliable and current information and possibly equal and bilateral character of communication, are components of effective activity in E-Training, we think that the natural environment of E-training seems to be the Internet as a channel of multilateral communication.

The Internet, with regard to its versatility in tools and technologies used, makes it possible to reach both wide range of addressees and minority groups. This medium helps to use active users as opinions leaders both in and out of the net.

The Internet allows, without any major problems, adopting numerous traditional tools of electronic communication. Because of its incredible dynamics it constantly offers new possibilities demanding from experts internet equipment for training purposes, requiring constant development and monitoring tendencies in the Internet as far as their potential usage is concerned.

REFERENCES


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