
E-learning, Knowledge Management, and Globalization : An Outlook

Jagtar Singh

Abstract

Developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly in intranets, the Internet, hardware, multimedia software, and videoconferencing have created a tremendous potential for multi-site course delivery and on-demand training to people's work sites. Four major areas for implementing E-learning are: knowledge management for corporates, education and training for corporate and individuals, performance support, and collaborative working. This paper describes these aspects in the verge of globalisation.

Keyword : E-Learning, Knowledge Management, ICT, Globalisation

0. The Cutting-edge

We are living in an era of instability, insecurity, and constant change. The knowledge acquired by a person during his formal education becomes obsolete at a very rapid rate in the digital environment. Lifelong learning is the only way to survive and thrive in the rapidly changing environment. E-learning is the cutting-edge of lifelong learning and e-learning gained ground during 1990s along with e-commerce when companies started selling their products via the web and using it for multimedia and interactive presentations and employees' training. E-learning is based on the concept of creating media-rich collaborative virtual experience that offers the benefits similar to the real physical experience in face to face learning and teaching. E-learning facilitates just-in-time learning without disruption of the daily work schedules. Moreover, it offers on-demand courses at the convenience of the learner. It is flexible in the sense that the traditional constraints of space and time don't bother the learner. Many educational institutions are moving in this direction, Stanford, Columbia, University of Phoenix, and University of Maryland to name a few. E-learning requires only a web browser and modem connection for access. Speed and minimal cost are the additional benefits. E-learning market is thus heading towards tremendous growth. Key contributors to this growth are the Fortune 500 companies spending huge amounts on knowledge management within their organizations. E-learning would enable employees to re-skill themselves via the web. Four major areas for implementing e-learning are: knowledge management for corporates, education and training for corporates and individuals, performance support, and collaborative working.

Developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), particularly in intranets, the Internet, hardware, multimedia software, and videoconferencing have created a tremendous potential for multi-site course delivery and on-demand training to people's work sites. Technology has the potential to facilitate provision of training to anyone, anywhere at anytime. It also allows people to go through the course content at their own speed, convenience and choice. There is a clear cut shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity with focus on personal knowledge, experience, and preference. Broadcasting and narrowcasting are possible now along with spontaneous feedback via the web. Web has supported the shift from rigid to flexible and from intra-active to interactive mechanisms of learning. The e-learning is further facilitated by the proliferation of the intranets and extranets. In this media rich environment, besides organizational learning, a number of education portals are also offering distance learning programmes to students, teachers and professionals. CD ROM-based multimedia solutions and user-friendly interfaces are contributing significantly to the process of e-learning. With improvement in bandwidth and telecom

infrastructure, the use of multimedia in creating e-learning solutions will increase sharply along with the use of intranets and the Internet.

Personal and professional competencies will play a pivotal role in managing success in the networked environment. Leadership and creativity are the life blood for obtaining the mission of an organization. Leadership must be capable of leading in a discontinuous future which is not sequential and cohesive. A leader should have a mind set that values differences, redefines and eliminates historical limitations, manages expectations, and thinks discontinuously. Capacity to learn constantly and quickly, skepticism, public service orientation, enabling skills, appreciation for colleagues, and risk taking are a few other traits desirable. Creativity, the most essential characteristic, is the ability to provide original and inventive response to a problem. Creativity includes flexibility, risk taking, enabling attitude and comfort with change. Creativity means problem sensitivity, i.e. the ability to identify a real problem, idea fluency, originality, and flexibility, i.e. the ability to consider a wide variety of dissimilar approaches to a problem. In fact the heart of the matter is how to deal with the existing professionals who possess a rich and irreplaceable knowledge of the organization and are thus important to the successful continuance of an organization's mission.

1. Knowledge Management

Real-time access to quality information and tacit knowledge is the basic condition for managing success at home and work. Knowledge and information are sources of power. With this power; individuals, organizations, and institutions can improve their products and services. Digital libraries and data networks have a pivotal role to play in empowering the learning individuals and organizations. Improved products and services mean customer creating value satisfactions. In other words it means market capturing.

Successful modern organizations are, by definition, knowledge-centric. ...'Knowledge services' is the term used to describe the management practice that provides the theoretical, intellectual, and philosophical foundation on which this success is built. In the knowledge-centric organization, knowledge services include the following:

- Information management- the organizational methodology that is concerned with the acquisition, arrangement, storage, retrieval, and use of information to produce knowledge;
- Knowledge management- the management practice that helps an enterprise manage explicit, tacit, and cultural information in order to reuse the information and, when appropriate, create new knowledge;
- Strategic (performance- centered) learning-the achievement of skills, competencies, knowledge, behaviors, and other outcomes required for excellence in workplace performance.¹

'Knowledge Services', when adopted in organization, clearly affects service delivery. As the organization seeks to achieve excellence through the convergence of information management, knowledge management, and strategic (performance-centered) learning, specific benefits accrue:

- Better leverage of resources and capabilities
- Better staff utilization
- Better performance
- Higher quality of deliverables
- Just-in-time, performance-centered learning and training
- Collaboration as the norm (with no disincentives for collaboration)

- More customer engagements and interactions, with both internal customers and the organization's external clients, customers and stakeholders
- Improved customer and staff satisfaction.²

2. Globalization

With the convergence of computer and communication technologies, globalization of knowledge and information is taking place. The local products and services have a global market. In other words, resources and services of one digital library are available to global information seekers via the Internet. When all the digital libraries become accessible via the Internet, it becomes a multimedia virtual library. Similarly international collaboration is now possible via the Web. The Web-based resources and services can be shared by the partners by adopting suitable policies and strategies. Digital resources and services are critical to the success of e-learning and knowledge management. Hence efforts must be made to develop digital libraries across frontiers.

3. Conclusion

E-learning is a pre-condition for success management in the digital environment. We must promote e-learning for knowledge and success management. Digital libraries must play a pivotal role in knowledge and information sharing. Networking of these digital libraries will further facilitate the development of a Global Virtual Library. Library and Information professionals (LIPs) must also learn to get information from knowledge and convert information into knowledge. Information consolidation and repackaging can go a long way in facilitating e-learning and knowledge management. Only this way, LIPs can help the end-users in coming out of a paradoxical situation in which they have more information than they can manage, but less information than they actually need. We must learn to manage chaos on the Web.

4. References

1. St. Clair, Guy, Victoria Harriston, and Thomas A. Pellizzi. Towards World-Class Knowledge Services: Emerging Trends in Specialized Research Libraries (Part One: The Management Perspective), *Information Outlook*, 7(6), June 2003, pp. 11.
2. St. Clair, Guy, Victoria Harriston, and Thomas A. Pellizzi. Towards World-Class Knowledge Services: Emerging Trends in Specialized Research Libraries (Part Two: The Customer Perspective), *Information Outlook*, 7(7), June 2003, pp. 11.

About Author



Dr. Jagtar Singh is Reader & Head in DLIS at Punjabi University, Patiala-147002, India, holds M.L.I.Sc. and Ph. D. He is the recipient of UGC Research Fellowship for Ph.D. and visited Loughborough University, UK. under Commonwealth Fellowship. He is associated with the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (OCLC, USA), a Research Affiliate at Stetson University (Florida, USA) and completed project under the UGC Research Award. He has published about 75 articles and research papers, one book and he is a regular contributor for various international publications and projects. He is editorial board member of the *ILA Bulletin*, *Information Research*, and launched an e-journal 'SALIN' and a 'Virtual Library for Information and Library Professionals'. He is General Secretary of PLA, Vice-President-North (elect) of ILA, Council Member of IASLIC and IATLIS, besides a life member in PLA, ILA, SIS, IASLIC, IATLIS and. He has visited Austria, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA on various academic assignments.

Email: jagtar@pbi.ac.in, kindu@glide.net.in