

IT in Education Management

Essay by Annette Bouzo (CELM)

German Award for Professional Education

Training administration software, talent- and learning management systems are irrevocable part of software supported education management. These findings have been proofed in any of the last years when it came to choosing the finalists competing to win the DBP (Deutscher Bildungspreis), the leading German Award for professional corporate education (1). Lacking in appropriate software support means setting the own competitiveness at risk. Software support in qualification processes is not a cost issue, but a lever to transfer investment in knowhow more efficiently.

There is one thing all winners of the past years had in common: next to well thought out and formulated educational concepts and well-structured processes they were employing a professional IT infrastructure. Without software support, education campaigns cannot contribute efficiently to the training objectives.

One of the reasons for insufficient software support might be the historic role of HR as a purely administrative unit and the anticipated risk of software projects.

Scope of IT Support

Staff development being seen as a pure administrative task causes only cost. The wider scope of integration of staff development in the corporate strategy is often still underestimated, which is visualized on insufficient clarification of the staff concept. This way a harmonious integration within the corporate strategy is hardly possible. Later integration is not often possible and results in a continuous readjustment.

However, not recognizing existing potential can be expensive. The more learning and therefore continuous improvement is connected within the organization, the more complex processes are, the higher the return of investment of professional software will be.

Nowadays knowhow is THE significant element in competition. Therefore, staff development has a key position. HR is the most significant contributor to knowledge and manpower of a corporation and therefore a driver for increase in productivity and efficiency.

Safe Software Implementation

Software implementations projects are not popular. One reason might be the anticipated cost, but also the knowledge about the complexity and importance of the successful project.

So-called Urban Legends about failed software projects are widespread. Taking a closer look will often show that problems were often direct results of insufficiently defined processes, responsibilities and bad project management. Another significant aspect can be found in the state of the corporate culture which was not ready for IT.

Cost of software can be controlled by thoroughly planned and uninterrupted project management. Scalable solutions contribute to fast amortisation. Also, the cooperation with established and experienced software partners is a way to reduce risks.

IT supported Corporate Learning

Relieving the training operatives from routine task in organization and communication is one of the very first steps. Using software, such as an LMS, reduces the administrative effort and increases the speed and quality of the information flow.

Supported functionalities such as correspondence, event planning and approval workflow accompanies the individual processes. This frees up resources for conceptual work, personal support, quality and continuous improvement management.

Portal solutions not only offer access to learning platforms and learning contents. Training portals also delegate some administrative tasks such as enrolment and triggering of approval processes to the employees. This way staff will actively be integrated in processes, which increases identification with education and change processes.

The training administration is typically very little interactive containing core data of employees, courses, qualification and other aggregated information. But the more detailed information is available, the better the basis for processes and controlling issues.

IT supported Self-Services

Streamlining of processes offers significant saving potential for enterprises of all sizes.

Web portals can offer various function packages to different target groups such as training officers, trainers, employees and managers. Reporting and planning processes but also enrolment and approval processes can be supported by appropriate software and generate an additional value.

Learning portals take the strain of HR and corporate academies. By employing manager and employee Self Service functions not only routine tasks have been delegated, but individuals are actively engaged in processes. This increased engagement will also lead to a higher degree of identification and commitment.

A finely adjustable rights concept is the basis for safely operating portal solutions and platforms and takes care of data protection issues. An experienced software-vendor can offer individual solutions or standards from his webservice library.

Many processes in education come down to communication at the end. Already during the concept phases of a software project, the coordination and information between internal and external institutions such as trainers, academies, suppliers etc. is mandatory. Processes are standardized, repeating activities which involve several persons and tasks and which are designed to increase efficiency. Employing software this will be lifted to a higher level. Set one

time in the right way, automated and it-supported processes decrease failure ratio and the resulting additional tasks.

There are many examples in the training field: enrolment- and cancellation processes from staff or a third party must not be completed by HR. Approval and certification processes document individual training as well as major education campaigns, the education history of an employee and more. Feedback surveys allow an evaluation of courses and trainers to support quality management.

Administrative processes based on flexible rights concepts can be delegated to managers or employees and create modern workflow solutions. Automated Processes can make a huge impact on efficiency. Leading principles for process design are traceability and reproducibility and must be based on precise requirement definition. This way a classic learning portal can be transformed to an integrated service platform with added value.

Learn-Chain-Management

Web based access and interfaces between enterprises and training institutions facilitate the coordination of efficient process management.

Examples are trainings offerings from external academies, published via the corporation's intranet which can be booked triggering the required approval routes. Various background routines such as invoicing, contingent bookings and allocation via cost centres may have been implemented. Even auctioning processes can be realized to install a competitiveness to maintain a high, but cost effective training quality.

Feedback surveys supporting quality management can be evaluated by entitled staff, based on a flexible rights management. Managers and HR can not only integrate relevant questions in the feedback questionnaires to clarify points of interest, but also generate reports evaluating the cooperation. Academies profit from higher customer loyalty and the close cooperation within an internal marketplace.

Education Controlling

To make sure that training efforts are efficient and goal oriented data is collected and interpreted. Continuous monitoring shows if activities are successfully conducted. Data will be evaluated on various levels. Workload indicators, quality data and test results of the different target groups are compared with training and financial objectives. Gap analysis of qualification profiles and the actual status in education campaigns are areas of interests. Monitoring them closely show developments and improvement potentials. Obviously, data evaluation by software is fast and efficient. Naturally surveys can be evaluated completely anonymous. Close monitoring enables faster implementation when strategic decisions demand changes.

Also, check our white paper concerning Education Controlling and Transfer Success, which you may download from our website for free.

Technology in Education Management

The survey 'HR Software 2015' which has been conducted by SoftSelect (2) has focussed on HR Solutions' technical background.

HR Software is mostly offered in combinations of web based components and classic client-/server architecture. Web based solutions reduce cost for installation and maintenance and can be operated by different browsers. However, a web based system must not necessarily be hosted in the cloud, but can also be implemented within the own IT landscape.

Mobile devices are omnipresent nowadays and can access a wide range of applications. Enterprises might want to decide themselves, for which functionalities offer an additional value, when they are accessed via a mobile.

The usual databases for HR software systems are MS SQL-Server, Oracle and MySQL and therefore reflect all technical standards in enterprises. LMS, training administration software and other applications are typically integrated in the system landscape via interfaces. These offer the basis for data exchange with other systems, such as finance for example. Interfaces

provide huge potential for increase of efficiency by supplying data and information in real-time. These features are standards for most software vendors and do not pose challenges for IT departments.

Conclusion

Education and talent management is essential for enterprises in today's knowledge based society to keep and expand their market position.

Sustainable management means actively taking part and strategically guiding personnel and staff development. IT support by integrated learning management systems, talent management and education controlling is mandatory to manage training programmes efficiently and economically according to company's objectives and strategy.

Education managers and staff development must be recognized as a strategic partner and equipped with competencies and budgets accordingly.

Continuous process optimization is a mandatory part of a software selection and implementation process. This way an added value can be generated. The solution lies in a thorough analysis of requirements, prioritization of demands the selection of the right partners with experience and a high degree of specialization.