

E-learning Quality in European SMEs: An Analysis of the E-learning Experiences in European Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

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A 30-minute presentation at the conference:
E-Learning Quality and Return on Investment for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
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WP1. STATE OF THE ART, QUALITY STANDARDS



The main product of this work package is the following book:

Paulsen, M. F. and V. Vieira (Eds.) 2006. [State of the Art Report: E-learning Quality in European SMEs - an Analysis of E-learning Experiences in European Small and Medium-sized Enterprises](#).

Bekkestua, NKI. (161 pages, pdf-format)

Shorter versions of the book are also available in Spanish, Portuguese, German and Estonian:

Confederació de Comerç de Catalunya 2007. [Calidad del e-learning en las PYMES europeas. Un análisis de las experiencias de e-learning en las pequeñas y medianas empresas europeas](#). Barcelona, CCC. (46 pages, pdf-format)

CECOA (Edição) 2007. [Relatório do Estado da Arte: Qualidade do E-learning para PMEs Europeias - uma Análise de Experiências de E-Learning em Pequenas e Médias Empresas](#). Lisboa, CECOA. (81 pages, pdf-format)

f-bb 2007. [Eine Analyse von E-Learning in europäischen Klein- und Mittelbetrieben](#). Nürnberg, f-bb (28 pages, pdf-format)

Tartu Ülikool 2007. [Hetkeolukorra kirjeldus: e-õppe kvaliteet Euroopa VKE-des e-õppe kogemuse analüüs Euroopa väikese ja keskmise suurusega ettevõtetes](#) (162 pages, pdf-format)

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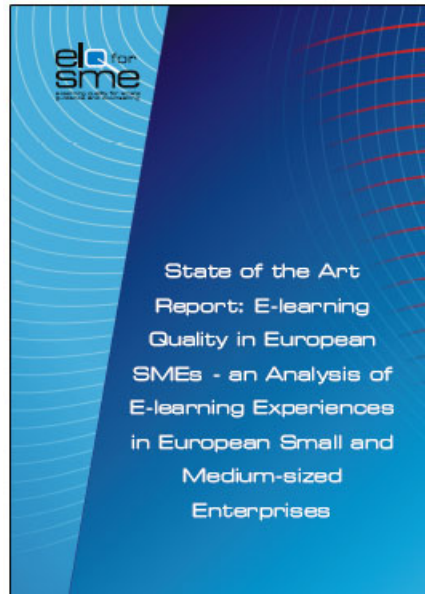
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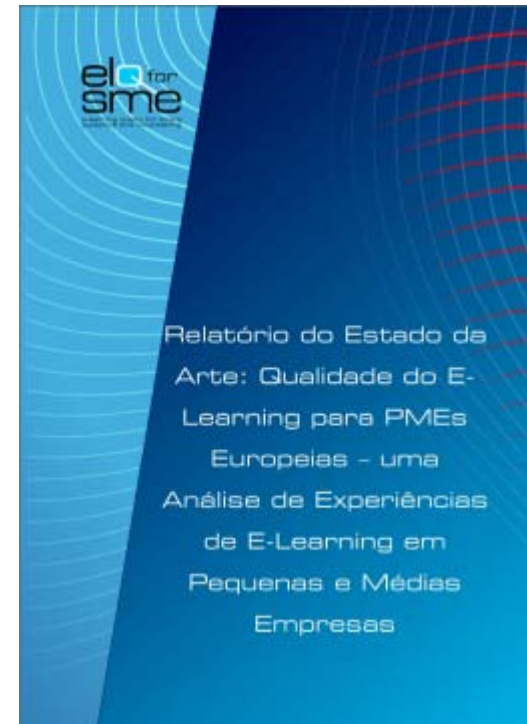
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Conclusions: Success and Quality in E-learning for SMEs

Categories of Cases

- Small enterprises
- Medium-sized enterprises
- Large enterprises
- E-learning providers



Small enterprises

- A-punkt is a German architecture firm (3 employees),
- Elektro-Biergans is a German company that provides electric installations (12 employees),
- Infocut is a software commercialization and maintenance company in Portugal (5 employees),
- Medilabor is a Portuguese company providing Health and Safety services to enterprises (19 employees),
- Tuca Informática is a small Spanish retail company selling computer products and advisory services (3 employees),
- Librería Álvarez is a bookshop in Spain (4 employees),
- Kometter-Kasca is a personal enterprise (1 employees),

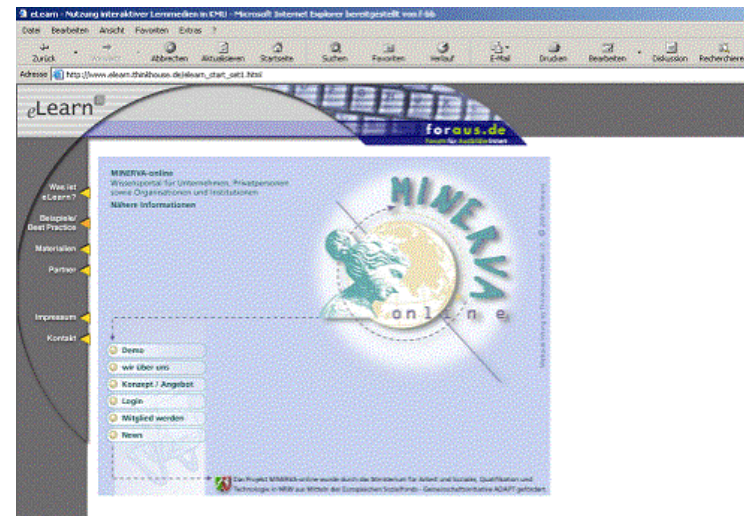
- These SMEs have so few employees that they are most likely to enroll individual students in generic commercial online courses that are relevant to their job performance

Elektro Biergans

(www.elektro-biergans.com)

- German SME with 12 employees within trade sector
- eLearning used for further training in office management

For Dagmar Biergans it was not possible to join classes two times a week for one and a half years. Minerva online focuses especially on women as a target group not being able to attend face to face seminars because of their family situation.



a-punkt (www.a-punkt.info)



- SME within service sector, dealing with architecture, involved in eLearning project dealing with soft skills/competencies.
- A-punkt has 3 employees. One of them has enrolled in a project management course, which is designed for employees in a firm.

Small enterprises : Success factors

- For small enterprises it is important that e-learning is flexible with regard to time and location since there are few colleagues to take over the work for those who are absent.
- To be successful, e-learning must be motivating as well as relevant and useful to the daily work and the tasks in the company.
- Motivation may be improved by use of multimedia, occasional face-to-face meetings, certificates and external financing.

Medium-sized enterprises

- Balti Investeeringute Grupi Pank – BIG has 101 employees in Estonia.
- Associação Nacional de Farmácias, the National Pharmacy Association (ANF) in Portugal, was established to defend the interests of pharmacists.
- Interpolis is a large insurance company in the Netherlands that offers an online course for prevention officers in SMEs.
- Rabobank is a coalition of independent financial intermediaries (that can be viewed as SMEs), which have a total of 4000 employees in the Netherlands.
- Golf supermarkets are run by independent entrepreneurs.
- Medium-sized enterprises have more employees, more resources and probably more e-learning options than small enterprises. However, so far it seems like few medium-sized enterprises have chosen to develop e-learning solutions by themselves. They seem to rely on external support.

Medium-sized enterprises: Success factors

- E-learning can reach and connect geographically dispersed groups and hence reduce travel time and cost. Furthermore, schedule flexibility makes it possible to reduce cost related to absence from work. E-learning also has logistic advantages. It is swifter and easier to distribute digital course material than printed material. This may increase its competitive strength because of accelerated time to market.
- Certification may be very useful. Both Interpolis and Rabobank emphasise the importance of obtaining a validation from an external certifying body. Golff maintains that it is an advantage to offer electronically printed certificates via HTML.
- Support from managers and internal e-learning competency are also mentioned as a success factors.
- Finally, successful e-learning should build on practical, in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of the subject area as well as suitable models and technology. This may include initial training to become familiar with the e-learning platform and the people involved with the course.

Golff supermarkets

Golff supermarkets are run by independent entrepreneurs which are SMEs. They purchase goods and services from Prisma Food Retail.

In 2005 the entrepreneurs initiated the e-BEAT e-learning initiative that was mediated by Prisma. By mid May 2006, 300 of the 1800 employees had taken part in the course Introduction to Working at Golff. The introductory course will be followed by two more e-learning courses: Golff Rules and Golff Marketing.

The Golff entrepreneurs all have a broadband Internet connection and a separate computer the employees can use to follow the courses. It is expected that each Golff entrepreneur will save about € 1500 per course.

home contact   Date: 06-11-2007

Welcome at **eBEAT**

Login eBEAT - members

 course members  manager

Vraag een online demo aan: push

Welcome at **eBEAT**

Een opleiding volgen was nooit zo eenvoudig. Met eBEAT kun je leren waar en wanneer je maar wilt. Een pc en een internetverbinding, meer heb je niet meer nodig. De grootste uitdaging voor ieder bedrijf: het ontwikkelen van de concurrentiekracht door de medewerkers. Investeren in hun ontwikkeling zal leiden tot een onderscheidende onderaeming.

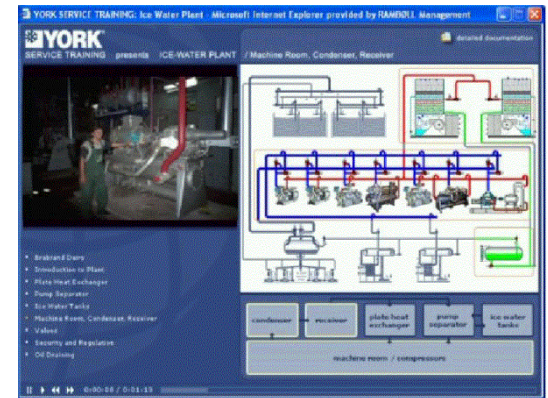
<p>Cursus: Iedere cursus bevat een aantal lessen. De lessen zijn kort en vormen een afgerond geheel. Iedere les telt mee voor een certificaat. De prestatie wordt bijgehouden.</p> <p>Je kunt zelf bepalen waar en wanneer je de cursus volgt!</p>	<p>Manager: Het gemak van een flexibel systeem, iedereen kan een opleiding volgen. eBEAT is optimaal aangepast aan de wensen van de ondernemer. Prestaties volgen, afdelingen vergelijken, bedrijven vergelijken.</p> <p>Kortom, volop besturingsinformatie!</p>	<p>Kennis: Voor iedere functie is kennis nodig. Of het nu gaat om de echte vakkennis of om de huisregels van het bedrijf.</p> <p>eBEAT heeft tot doel om die kennis op snelle en voordelige manier op de juiste plaats te krijgen.</p>
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Large enterprises

- KPMG Norway is a separate and independent legal entity in the global KPMG network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services.
- York Refrigeration is a Danish subsidiary of York International Corporation, a global concern within heating, ventilation and refrigeration.
- Roche Diagnostics has 250 employees in Austria. It is affiliated with Roche, which is a large international healthcare company.
- These enterprises are too large to qualify as SMEs, but large SMEs can benefit from their experiences.
- All have enough resources to develop most of their e-learning content internally. They have some external help with development of graphics, video and web adaptation, but the internal employees are the content experts.
- The e-learning platform is not a part of the companies' core business, so the companies buy these services from external hosts that provide LMS services.

YORK Refrigeration



- Training installation of cooling systems and reparation of cooling system components.
- Web-based e-learning used in conjunction with classroom and workshop training as individual learning and as manuals and documentation
- When the e-learning was introduced, the customers were included as a secondary target group. For them, the value of the e-learning initiative has a much larger potential and a much better effect than expected.
- The video “York Icewater Plant” is available via www.arken.com.
- Per Schou-Nielsen explains how York is using these tools in a Danish video interview, which is available via (<http://www.mediastationexpress.dk>).

Large enterprises: Success factors

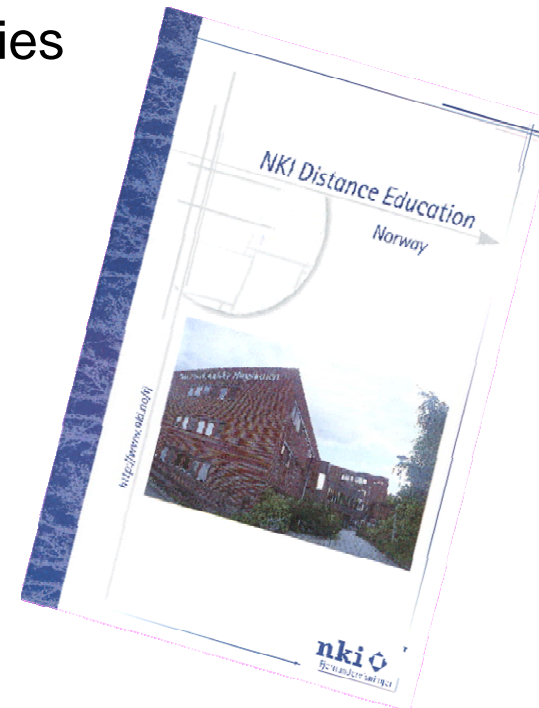
- KPMG focuses on the necessity to find the right balance between e-learning and other training activities. The company argues that e-learning is flexible time- and location-wise and that it is efficient regarding travel cost and time. Further, the courses are nearly compulsory since the knowledge of the course content is essential to the employees, and they are required to spend a certain number of hours on training to maintain their licence.
- At York, multimedia content is successful because it supports a more visual learning style efficiently. E-learning has resulted in better internal communication and broader understanding of York offerings. The company has further experienced that e-learning content can have high importance in sales negotiations and that it has had a positive effect by giving the employees a common experience to build on.
- At Roche, e-learning has made it possible to confine co-operation between clients and contractor. It is recommended that the introduction of e-learning should be well planned. The case study finally maintains that e-learning must be obligatory to become a success.

E-learning providers

- NKI is a major provider of distance and online education in Norway.
- ETraining OÜ is a commercial provider of online education services and courses in Estonia.
- CINEL is a vocational training centre for the electricity industry in Portugal.
- Many European providers of education and training are SMEs that offer e-learning courses and services. These institutions may be increasingly dependent on e-learning to survive. They may also be specially interesting as examples of how other enterprises may use e-learning in the future.

NKI Internet College: www.nettskolen.com

- Operated by NKI Distance Education (www.nki.no)
- One of Europe's largest providers of online distance education
- Online education since 1987 (About 90 000 course enrolments)
- Broad spectrum of subjects from secondary to master level
- About 460 distance education courses online
- About 8800 online students in at least 35 countries
- About 70 % women
- Revenue of 9 million Euros in 2005
- You may start whenever you like
- Individual progress plans
- Always room for more students
- Exams at local schools and embassies
- Online students get better grades



NKI Coordinates the Megatrends project: A study of European Megaproviders in e-learning



1. “E-learning initiatives that did not reach targeted goals” provides ten case study articles and analyses of nine prestigious European e-learning initiatives that did not reach their targeted goals.

www.nettskolen.com/in_english/megatrends/Book3.pdf

2. “Megaproviders of e-learning in Europe” is a major, new book which includes 26 case study articles of European megaproviders of e-learning.

www.nettskolen.com/in_english/megatrends/Book2.pdf

3. “The Provision of e-learning in the European Union” presents data gathered from Norway and the 25 members of the European Union as an introductory overview of the provision of e-learning in Europe. www.nettskolen.com/in_english/megatrends/Book1.pdf

E-learning providers: Success factors

- Motivated employees and management support.
- Opportunities to study during work hours.
- Courses relevant to their daily work or personal interests.
- Courses will result in promotions or better payment.

E-learning Strategies

- The small enterprises have so few employees that they are most likely to enrol individual students in commercial online courses.
- The medium-sized enterprises may also benefit from more specialized courses offered through a branch association or in cooperation with suppliers or chains.
- Large enterprises may have enough resources to develop e-learning courses internally.
- The e-learning providers are SMEs that may be especially interesting as examples of how other enterprises may use e-learning in the future.

E-learning advantages especially pointed out in the case descriptions

- Improved flexibility in time and location
- Reduced costs for travel, accommodation and seminar rooms
- Swifter and cheaper distribution of learning material
- Quicker introduction of new products due to accelerated training of many employees
- Increased sales because customers perceive e-learning as a sign of high competence
- Increased sales because e-learning could add value to the product
- Improved relations with customers and suppliers

SMEs could use e-learning successfully based on three different models:

- **Generic courses offered on the open market (12 cases).**
A model suitable for all SMEs because it does not incur any internal costs related to course development or investments in e-learning systems. One pitfall is that employees who study generic courses could use the course qualifications to apply for a job in another company. Addressing this challenge, BIG employees have the obligation to work for the company for 12 months after finishing the course.
- **Sector courses developed by associations or cooperating partners (3 cases).**
A model suitable for all SMEs because the developmental and operational costs could be divided among a number of SMEs. The model may also result in improved relations between the enterprises in associations, branches or value chains.
- **Internal courses developed by the SME with some help from external providers of e-learning services (3 cases).**
A model primarily suitable for large SMEs that have the necessary competence and resources internally. The employees are usually the content experts since the course topics often focus on expert knowledge related to the companies' core products and services. The e-learning platform is not a part of the companies' core business, so the companies often buy these services from external hosts.

Wide range of courses

- The cases show that there is a wide range of course topics that can be used successfully in e-learning.
- The generic courses offered on the open market included project management, office management, Microsoft applications, ICT and language courses.
- The sector courses and internal courses were much more specialized and related to the special needs of the sector or institution.

Thank You!



Questions?

The presentation and contact information is available via:

<http://home.nettskolen.com/~morten/>