Blended Learning Case Study:
"New to the Leadership Role"

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Abstract—The blended learning "Leadership Program" is a clever combination of self-learning and face-to-face teaching periods. At the heart of the self-learning period are interactive exercises and multimedia eLearning videos. A moderator, who leads every section of the eLearning, ensures a strong involvement for the participants. With the help of valuable play scenes with real actors, the participants get encouraged to question their own behavior in daily business. In addition, there are graphically animated explainer videos and highly qualified interactive learning exercises.

The eLearnings also contain transfer-exercises, which empower participants to adapt new learning contents easily to their working environment and gain valuable experiences.

The blended learning "Leadership Program" contains, besides the eLearning videos, two face-to-face teaching periods. These periods are very important for the learning experience, because they put focus on self-reflection and refer to the transfer-exercises from the eLearnings. The trainer discusses the experiences with the participants, encourages them to share their findings from the self-learn period and provides feedback and advice. The face-to-face teaching is not about delivering knowledge, this happens during the self-learning period. It is about strengthening it.

In the blended learning approach, the trainer is a learning companion who guides participants through the different learning periods. Therefore, the trainer is always available for guidance during the self-learning period. The participants can get back to them over phone or email. All trainers have a special certificate, which enables them to teach with our blended learning approach. They know all eLearnings and transfer-exercises very well. Furthermore, a trainer guideline was specially developed for every blended learning program. This is possible due to our cooperation with the training company "Pawlik", which gives us the opportunity to work with 150 specialized and highly certified trainers.

Self-learning and face-to-face teaching periods are framed by webinars. In the first session the participants get a detailed overview about the blended learning approach and its structure. In addition, they have the opportunity to introduce themselves and get to know each other. The blended learning journey ends with two coaching calls, where the trainer offers support to the participants, in case they struggle to put their learnings into practice.

Our blended learning "Leadership Program" can be booked over Pink University. There are no extra bookings required for the trainers. It is structured in modules and can be adapted easily to customer needs.

Keywords—e-learning, blended learning, elearning

1 Initial Situation

For the executive development of a medium-sized company with 1200 employees, a training program was sought that could be used anywhere and started at any time. A key selection criterion was the sustainability of the training program. The participants were asked to demonstrate that they could learn new behaviors and apply them in their daily work. The performance measurement was not part of the project.

2 Project Participants

The project was awarded to Pink University and Pawlik Consultants. Pink University was founded in 2011 and is now considered a quality leader in the production of digital training media for the training of multidisciplinary competencies. Pink University produces and distributes the video-based e-learnings on its own behalf and under its own name. Pink University's programme planning is based on an analysis of the competence maps of more than 30 companies in Germany. Pink University's e-library currently comprises around 100 German- and English-language e-learning courses,

which can be integrated into the company's own learning management systems via SCORM or used on Pink University's cloud-based e-learning platform.

Pawlik Consultants is one of the largest training companies in Germany. More than 300 trainers are working for national and international companies. The trainings of Pawlik Consultants are also competence-oriented and are based on the scientific work of the psychologist Prof. Dr. Julius Kuhl.

The didacticians from Pink University and Pawlik Consultants jointly developed the format of the online blended training used in this project.

3   Project Architecture

It emerged from the project scope that the training programme must support targeted learning. Participants should develop noticeable behavioural changes within a defined period of maximum three months. The decision was therefore made in favour of online blended training. The online blended training "New to the Leadership Role" should be started and completed within a period of six months. It consisted of three main components.

3.1   Video-based, multimedia e-learnings

The e-learning modules covered the following topics:

- Motivating Team Members
- Delegating Tasks
- Giving Feedback
- More Energy, More Productivity, More Success
- How to Use Questioning Techniques
- Active Listening
- Communicating with Respect and Appreciation

All e-learnings are structured as e-trainings. They contain feature film sequences to illustrate action patterns and behavioural alternatives. The e-learnings also include explanatory films on methods and theories. In order to achieve the necessary involvement, especially in the area of self-learning, the participants are guided through the e-learnings by a moderator. The moderator welcomes the participants, interprets the play scenes, introduces the explanatory films, explains the tasks and finally says goodbye to the participants. Each e-learning is self-contained and has a processing time of approximately 50 minutes. The e-learning can be developed chapter by chapter. Each chapter takes about 5-10 minutes.

Another feature of e-learning and online blended training is the transfer tasks. Each e-learning includes one to five transfer tasks. These transfer tasks cannot be done "right" or "wrong". The aim of these tasks is exclusively to encourage the participants to deal with empirical reality. The tasks should help to question action routines and to develop a new behavioural repertoire.

3.2   The learning guides

In this blended learning setting, the learning guides are completely freed from the need to impart knowledge. Their central task is to moderate learning processes. The anchor point for this are the transfer tasks. The results of the transfer tasks are presented, analysed and discussed in regular online sessions. In this way the participants receive feedback from their colleagues and fellow participants.

A further task of the learning guides is to be available to the participants for 1:1 coaching. The learning companions can see whether the participants are committed to the online tasks from the appendix and the online presence. Where this is not the case, they can discuss the background and, if necessary, help with regulation and advice.

Since blended learning should be started at any time and no consideration should be given to illnesses, holidays and other reasons for absences, it is an additional task of the learning companions to always have the participants on the same level of knowledge and information (from a group size of approximately 10 participants, the learning companion receives organisational support for this work area).

3.3   The learning group

In addition to self-learning using the six multimedia e-learnings, the online blended training focuses on social collaboration. The learning guide forms learning groups at the beginning of the training. The learning groups can be formed from a geographical point of view. However, this is not mandatory nor necessary. The learning groups should not comprise more than 5 participants. These learning groups meet in a self-organized way in order to deepen and, if necessary, expand the transfer tasks. It is essential for the group work that only concrete challenges and tasks arising from real business are discussed. This measure is intended to make workplace learning more effective.

4   The Technical Basis of the Project

The entire "New to the Leadership Role" training programme is online. Depending on the circumstances, physical meetings are possible, but not necessary. All meetings, including group meetings, can take place online, as well as 1:1 coaching. This means that online blended training can be started quickly and flexibly.

It is part of the didactic concept to let the participants learn as much as possible at the workplace. It is therefore part of the didactic concept to use the existing communication tools. The e-learnings can be easily integrated into the existing LMS via SCORM, or the participants use the e-learnings on the e-learning platform of Pink University. All they need is an internet connection.

The company's internal communication tools are used for communication between the participants, for communication within the learning groups and for communication with the learning guide. If it turns out to be more practicable to use consumer tools and the participants agree, services such as WhatsApp, Facebook or Twitter can

also be used. Common mail programs and video conferencing tools are often used. A desired side effect of the idea of using the existing communication tools is to promote the networking of the participants in the team and in the company. At the same time, the competence in handling digital communication and conference tools is expanded and routinized.

5   Target Group of the Training Course

The target group of the Blended Learning "Leadership Program" are junior managers from large to medium-sized companies and corporations. They are to be supported in their first position as managers.

6   Goals of the Training Measure

The aim of the blended learning "Leadership Program" is for participants to question their behavioural routines and develop alternative courses of action. In the course of the training, the participants should build up a behavioural repertoire that enables them to act competently in open and new situations.

7   Author

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