Reducing "Time to Proficiency" in Global ERP Deployments

A Five-Phased Approach to Effective User Training

A Lionbridge White Paper

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Executive Summary

Research shows that a simple one percent increase in productivity typically produces more than 10 times the impact of a one percent decrease in training costs.[1]

The purpose of large-scale enterprise applications is to streamline business processes and enhance workforce productivity. In alignment with that goal, the first measure of success for an accompanying training program must be its ability to deliver increased productivity.

ERP-related training serves at least these two basic functions:

1. Help users obtain critical system knowledge to reduce uncertainty and stimulate greater user participation with the software.

2. Instill a sense of empowerment to front line employees, reducing anxieties created by job changes, new responsibilities, and work segregation that have traditionally undermined success for ERP deployments.

Whether you are implementing SAP, PeopleSoft, Oracle, or another ERP system, you will inevitably end up customizing the software, limiting the usefulness of the ERP vendor's standard training program. For example, as ERP deployments evolve to meet your organization's specific business needs, users need supplemental training to address the hundreds of changed roles within the ERP environment.

ERP deployments that span multiple geographies also require customized training content. When targeting a global workforce, training initiatives must take language and culture into account, including the widely disparate learner expectations that are established by different national education systems.

Effective training reduces "time to proficiency," as well as overall training time, and empowers your users — in all regions — to interact fully with new software and embrace new business processes. This, in turn, helps to engage, support, and improve the productivity of your global workforce.

This paper discusses a five-phased approach to effective user training in global ERP deployments.

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[1] *Chief Learning Officer* Magazine, May 2003

Accelerating Productivity through eLearning

Enterprise eLearning programs continue to gain traction as more companies experience operational efficiencies and higher employee productivity from their deployment. Productivity is a primary corporate differentiator, fueled by shareholders, analysts, and managers who consider it to be a key strategy for improving competitive position. Properly designed, learning investments are critical drivers within a company's overall value creation strategy. A sound learning program helps to:

- Reduce the time it takes employees to attain a competent level of performance in new skill areas.

- Increase a company's retention rates.

- Decrease the time employees spend away from their jobs tracking down answers to their questions, or coaching others.

- Increase worker output (i.e., calls per hour, parts manufactured per day, etc.).

- Improve the quality of the company's product or service.

- Increase the company's ability to assess and mitigate risk.

In essence, the skills and abilities that make up an organization's human capital are its greatest assets. Ongoing investments in training programs are needed to advance and protect them.

By delivering eLearning content in local languages, enterprises can avoid comprehension problems and reduce the costs of training and support for ERP applications. Training is up to 100% more effective when conducted in local languages.

But localization is not limited to language translation. Preservation of instructional intent across language and locale necessitates the modification of content and delivery to match learner expectations. This means careful construction of source content, and/or thorough modification at the region or country level.

> *"We measure the effectiveness of our in-language training courses and have found that the majority of people experienced a 30 to 40 percent improvement on the pre-tests if they are taught in their own language. We see an 80 to 100 percent improvement on the post-test when they're taught in their own language."* [Energy Company][2]

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[2] Source: *Beggars at the Globalization Banquet: Optimizing the ROI of Localization in the Enterprise*, November 2002, by Common Sense Advisory, Inc.

The Business Case for Outsourced eLearning Development

Advancing learning within an organization presents significant challenges for companies. In-house learning technologies and processes are often outdated, and newer, more robust learning systems can be technically hard to implement and integrate. Since the learning industry continues to change rapidly, specialized, up-to-date knowledge is needed in key areas, including:

- Evolving industry standards like SCORM and AICC
- Integration of disparate eLearning technology
- Management of eLearning tool vendors
- Mitigation of corporate risk

In-house development of an eLearning solution that addresses these challenges requires significant time, expertise, and expense. For example, building an eLearning solution typically requires proficiency in Web infrastructure, learning technologies, high bandwidth solutions, instructional design, and database and server technologies. Specific components needed to build a scalable, enterprise, training solution include:

- Standards-compliant learning management system (LMS)
- Scalable, web-based delivery infrastructure
- Tracking and analysis systems
- Assessment technology
- Courseware development tools
- Streaming media and collaboration tools
- Security software
- Interfaces to business and enterprise applications
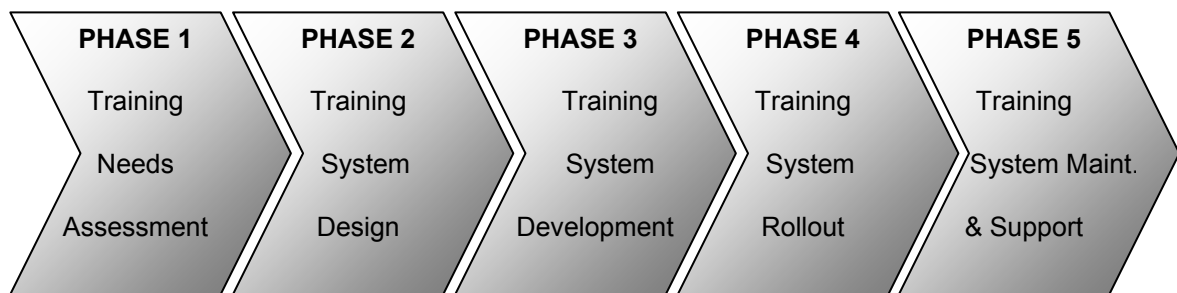- High-availability servers, databases, and network infrastructures

Additionally, as ERP implementations experience last-minute changes in scope, it is often difficult for companies to provide short-term training resources to support urgent delivery schedules.

With all of the complexities associated with building an eLearning program, more and more companies are choosing to outsource. By partnering with a vendor who is fully engaged in global eLearning for ERP, your company can ensure productivity-enhancing training for users, without making large and permanent investments in staff, software, and equipment.

An eLearning provider with domain-specific expertise in ERP-related projects can help ensure swift global adoption and maximum utilization of your ERP system. Working with a partner who understands regional differences in learning styles, and is able to deliver localization-ready content, can further increase your user productivity.

Five Phases of an ERP eLearning Program Rollout

To successfully deploy an ERP eLearning program, it is important to choose a vendor that offers a well-coordinated, logical set of process steps. An appropriate end-to-end ERP application training rollout has the following elements:

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Training	Training	Training	Training	Training
Needs	System	System	System	System Maint.
Assessment	Design	Development	Rollout	& Support

Phase 1: Training Needs Assessment

This is the initial phase of analysis where the training needs of the learner community are assessed in terms of skills, behavior, and subject knowledge requirements. It is critical to understand the learner profiles and styles since different functional learner groups will vary significantly in terms of their receptiveness to a particular pedagogical approach — Corporate Accounting, for example, will be different from Customer Service. A comprehensive learning profile is developed to define the required curriculum and necessary change management activities.

Phase 2: Training System Design

This is the design phase where input from the previous phase is used to design plans for content creation, as well as for management, delivery, tracking, and administration of the training platform. A design validation plan is implemented by creating prototypes and pilot content, which is tested across different user groups. User feedback is then incorporated into the final design. A key output of this phase is a Learning Objects Mapping grid, which assigns all learners to a set of learning objects mapped on the basis of the functional group they belong to and their role definition.

Phase 3: Training System Development

This is the actual "build" phase. It focuses on the development of the training platform, eLearning content, and the Instructor Led Training (ILT) courseware (if needed). All of the required functionalities for learning management, content creation, and delivery are built into the base platform and configured to the IT environment at the client organization's end. Different content types for eLearning are developed based on the inputs from the Learning Objects Mapping Grid.

Localization also begins in this phase. Learning programs developed with an understanding of the social, political, cultural, and historical nuances of the target geographies will achieve the highest scores in skill development, course completion, and cost containment metrics.

Phase 4: Training System Rollout

This is the rollout phase and focuses on the effective delivery of all components of the training. It typically starts with a "Train the Trainers" program, where subject matter experts (SMEs) train a super user group across the client organization. The eLearning content is subjected to both unit and system testing and also undergoes incremental content changes based on the actual user acceptance testing of the application. The content is then rolled out on the training platform. Help desk and other support requirements are identified and implemented prior to the rollout.

Phase 5: System Maintenance and Ongoing Support

Following system rollout, ongoing support is provided to the eLearning system users. Most eLearning solution providers include the maintenance of the eLearning application as part of the scope of work.

Conclusions

In order to streamline business activities and improve market performance, many global organizations are deploying or updating large-scale ERP systems. But return on a company's ERP investment is only maximized when all of the employees, vendors, and business partners who work with the system can use it effectively.

Training accelerates adoption of global business processes, ensuring that users come up to speed quickly and interact easily with the ERP system. But the complexities associated with building an effective eLearning program are significant, especially where a global workforce necessitates localization.

By partnering with a vendor who is fully engaged in global eLearning and has domain-specific expertise in ERP-related projects, companies can ensure productivity-enhancing training for their users — without large investments in additional staff, software, and equipment.

Lionbridge recommends a five-phased approach that ensures swift global adoption, maximum utilization, and enhanced workforce productivity for large-scale ERP deployments.

Additional resources

To learn more about eLearning, ERP, and globalization, please visit the Lionbridge Knowledge Center: www.lionbridge.com/kc

To speak with a Lionbridge specialist, call +1-781-434-6111 or email info@lionbridge.com.