



The benefits and drawbacks of online learning

Whether you're a high-school teacher looking to engage your students in a more interactive way, or a corporate trainer hired by a large company to design training curricula, e-learning packs a punch when it comes to benefits that make the creation and delivery processes easier and hassle-free. Important benefits are outlined below:

No Boundaries, No Restrictions

Along with locational restrictions, time is one of the issues that learners and teachers both have to face in learning. In the case of face-to-face learning, the location limits attendance to a group of learners who have the ability to participate in the area, and in the case of time, it limits the crowd to those who can attend at a specific time. E-learning, on the other hand, facilitates learning without having to organize when and where everyone who is interested in a course can be present.

More Fun

Designing a course in a way that makes it interactive and fun through the use of multimedia or the more recently developed methods of *gamification* (further discussed in later chapters) enhances not only your engagement factor, but also the relative lifetime of the course material in question.

Cost Effective

This is directed to both learners and teachers, but there is a good chance that whatever your role you had to pay exorbitant amounts of money at some point to acquire updated versions of textbooks for school or college. While textbooks often become obsolete after a certain period of time, the need to constantly acquire new editions is not present in e-learning.

It Just Fits!

As companies and organizations adopt technologies to improve the efficiency of day-to-day operations, the use of the internet becomes a necessity. As multinational corporations expand across the globe, the chances of working with people from other countries increases, and training all those parties together is an issue that e-learning successfully addresses. And that's a great advantage of online learning!

Let's blend all of that together and apply it in a real-life scenario:

In an effort to enhance the credibility of course material, oftentimes a professor will summon a field specialist to give a lecture relevant to the topic at hand. In the traditional model of education, the professor would have to extend an invitation to said expert, and incur the costs of his flight, stay and training.

With e-learning:

With e-learning the professor has the ability to host a guest lecture without having to spend much money. It can be done virtually, with cameras for both the lecturer and the students, and with the use of microphones to facilitate the same level of interaction that would be possible if the lecturer were physically present in the room. The added benefit comes in when we are able to replay the lecture and gain even more out of it. Students that missed out can view the recording, or students that attended can watch it again to further their understanding.

Concerns that arise with e-learning

Even given all the benefits of e-learning, one cannot deny there are some drawbacks. A good example of a disadvantage of online learning is that practical skills are somewhat harder to pick up from online resources. For example, although building a wooden table is something you can easily share information about, record videos of and explain, the practical experience is essential. Pottery and car engineering are examples of skills that require hands-on experience.

Isolation

Though e-learning offers ease, flexibility and the ability to remotely access a classroom in the student's own time, learners may feel a sense of isolation. This is because learning online is a solo act for the most part, which may give the learner the feeling that they are acting completely alone. As technology progresses and e-learning benefits from the advancements being made, learners can now engage more actively with professors or other students using tools such as video conferencing, social media, and discussion forums amongst others.

Health Related Concerns

E-learning requires the use of a computer and other such devices; this means that eyestrain, bad posture and other physical problems may affect the learner. When running an online course it's a good practice to send out guidelines about correct sitting posture, desk height, and recommendations for regular breaks.

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