

A conceptual CSR eLearning corporate activity

In this eGuide, we detail how using the technology of eLearning as a means to compliment your Corporate Social Responsibility activities while being suitably aligned with company legal obligations as per The Skills Development Act, BBBEE compliance, and other government regulated obligations. Not forgetting of course the main purpose of CSR; for corporates to realise their power in the economy is critical to the livelihood of our nation, therefore corporates understand and take to heart their role in helping upskill our people for a better tomorrow.

Companies operating in South Africa are all to aware of their obligations towards annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, aimed to boost the previously underprivileged social status of South Africa, and while we have a legal responsibility, companies receive a series of benefits from these CSR activities.

CSR BENEFITS INCLUDE:

Improvement of BBBEE Score
BBBEE Rebates
Mass Marketing and Sales boost



Why companies ❤️ eLearning

The marriage between eLearning enhancing your organisation can be certified in various ways. The eLearning method has fast become a firm training solution in most organisations worldwide, largely due to the ultra flexible nature of eLearning. Companies of all sizes are now beginning to see the advantages of moving their corporate training online. Corporations now report that eLearning is the second most valuable training method that they use. This is no surprise, given that eLearning saves businesses at least 50% when they replace traditional instructor-based training with e-Learning. Not to mention that eLearning cuts down instruction time by up to 60%

Reduced training costs

One of the most significant advantages of online corporate training is that it actually reduces training costs. There will no longer be a need for printed training materials or even on-site facilitators, given that all of the information an employee will need can be

found within the online training platform. While there may be an initial investment involved, the upkeep costs of an online training platform are minimal when compared to traditional face-to-face employee development.

Rapid deployment of content

Online training can be delivered quickly and conveniently, so that employees are able to acquire new information or skill sets almost immediately. Rather than having to wait for printed materials to be developed, and shared across your organization's offices you can simply upload your materials and offer employees access to a wealth of information right away. A good example of rapid deployment of content is : [Paul to add a link to a NLT video/ANS live screen video example showing a form of rapid deployment.](#)

Ultra flexible

Online training also gives employees the chance to access important information or reference materials whenever and wherever they need it. For instance, if a member of staff needs to refresh their memory regarding how to carry out a customer refund, they can simply log into the LMS and click on the customer service module to find out about the various steps involved. This means that you can keep your employees informed and knowledgeable about company procedures, which results in improved customer satisfaction and/or improved business practices.

The cost factor

One factor in favor of eLearning in most industries is cost, namely that an eLearning solution costs less to deploy and run compared to traditional learning. What does matter in finances is the overall efficiency and return of investment of the training, and that's something where eLearning is a no-brainer.

Improved knowledge retention

When an employee is able to learn in an interactive and engaging setting, then this leads to improved knowledge and skill set retention. Giving them access to interactive, reality-based scenarios, games, and assessments enables them to digest the information more effectively, which allows them to utilize the data they have learned when they venture into the working environment.

Training that sticks

Employees don't have to rush through the content that is being presented in a corporate classroom setting or move at the pace of their co-workers. They are given the opportunity to acquire and fully absorb what is being taught before they move on within the online training course.

Immediate access to informative resources

By including links to articles, webinars, and videos, you are supplying your staff with references and information that they can use to expand their knowledge base and fine-tune their skill sets.

Reduced employee turnover rates

Happy and well-informed employees are employees who are more likely to remain loyal to your organization. By giving them access to round-the-clock online training and self-paced learning modules, they can further their professional goals and feel motivated to improve their on-the-job performance. They can also pinpoint areas they may need to work on and find out their core strengths, so that they are able to become better employees and more informed advocates for your brand.

SO WHAT DOES eLEARNING HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR CORPORATE CSI?



The next time you are sitting down with your CSR team to discuss your organisations CSR plan, take a moment to think outside the box.

You know how it goes; CSR activities typically are delivered in the form of direct money transactions or actual goods and services. Your organisation and CSR Team will be in charge of deciding what consists of those goods or transactions you will be contributing towards your organisations Skills Development obligations. Depending on your industry and the compliance rules of such industries, corporates typically contribute to their Skills Development obligations by building a school, donating mass text books, funding training programs, and learnership/scholarship programs. Goods typically include donating furniture, IT hardware, food and supplies or even transport / vehicles. So what beg's our question, what does eLearning have to do with your CSR?

Simply put...

Use eLearning technology as an innovative CSR activity and your company reaps the benefits.

Would it not be nice to have a product that your organisation could benefit from in a various ways? Organisations typically purchase or make an investment in something with the definitive expectation to get something more back from such investments/purchases. Every CEO is asking how you will be able to maximise on the companies investments. Why would it be any different from how far and wide you can utilise all the resources of your company? This is where rethinking how to use an eLearning solution may very well fill more holes for your organisation than you may have thought before.

Investing in eLearning in these various ways will:

- Boost your companies bottom line
- Improve/Maintain your BBBEE Scoring
- Compliment your ETI Scoring
- Compliment your CSR company plan

- Money back/saved: Your organisation will reap the monetary benefits of your contributions (Including advertising tax benefits you may not know about)
- Train your internal staff and complete your internal training needs - all with one technology.
- Compliment the needs of each department in your organisation. Your Finance department will be able to claim back money for your company. HR will have a product set in place that addresses their training/HR needs. Your marketing department completes their annual task of running successful CSR initiatives with little sweat.
- Compliment your organisations annual legal obligations as per the Skills Act/BEE requirements.

Sounds good, right? So how can you do all of this using one method or product? Thanks to the flexibility of eLearning, organisations can use this method in new fresh ways that will directly impact their organisation on multiple levels. If you are thinking about using eLearning for your corporates training needs or if you already have an eLearning solution in place, here are a few other ways you can maximise on the various ways an eLearning approach can benefit your company:



eLearning - The CSR Plan



THE LAW

CSR: As each South African business knows, companies need to contribute a certain amount of services / money per year towards the economy and mostly towards Skills Development. It is a reality in South Africa today (both in practice and by virtue of regulation in many cases) that companies with higher BEE ratings are more likely to obtain contracts from the government and other BEE conscious trading partners. As a result, if a company, for example, provides a training solutions like bursaries to recipients from underprivileged backgrounds with the specific purpose of enabling it to meet its BEE scorecard requirements, SARS is likely to allow the CSR expenditure as a tax deduction.

STAFF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: By law, all South African companies are required to have a staff skills development plan and ensure their staff members are receiving on- going skills training as per The Skills Development Act 1998.



THE eLEARNING SOLUTION

Investing in an eLearning solution can be used to also manage and compliment the requirements of your CSR Plan and obligations as well as your companies Skills Development obligations. How?

CSR!

So your organisation has decided to contribute towards the Skills Development demand this year through your CSR initiative. Last year you provided R 30, 000 towards text books. What about this year? What multi flexible product/service/resource could your company invest in that will benefit both your internal requirements and re-use in as part of your CSR initiative?

eLearning Technology!

When you are deciding how your organisation will conduct this years CSR Plan and what services or products would be contributed, think about providing an eLearning Learner Management platform as part of your CSR contribution.

South Africa currently relies largely on corporates to provide organisations with the tools and resources towards skill development projects and initiatives. Companies typically provide funding for training, furniture and resources for the building of an educational set up and one of the most important CSR needs being providing laptops and technology equipment and services. Providing an eLearning system is a no brainer - You are providing the access of education and skill enhancement tools to organisations who require these resources and considering this CSR initiative is aimed at Skills Development, your organisation immediately meets those compliance requirements. Consider your CSR for the year done!

Element	Weighting	Code series reference
Ownership	25 points	100
Management control	20 points	200
Skills development	25 points	300
Enterprise and Supplier Development	50 points	400
Socio-Economic Development	5 points	500

The benefits

- As per the BBEE Skills Development Act, will qualify to receive TAX rebate off CSR initiatives and total contributions since the product you have supplied directly impacts the need for skills development and is providing the imperative tools to conduct approved training and skills development projects. The current scoring benefit of the BBEE is 5

points.

- Your CSR Annual plan is completed and your initiatives have been deployed.
- Quick deployment. Just like the nature of eLearning, investing in eLearning technology towards your CSR chosen organisation is quick and simple, with no heavy logistics, onsite demands, transport requirements and costs are only towards the actual eLearning software purchase.
- Considering this would impact your marketing department, your advertising costs associated to such CSR initiatives can also be submitted for tax rebates.
- This form of contribution improves your ETI Scorecard and rating. The Requirements of ETI is a separate company obligation (which this form of CSR initiative will also be deemed worthy as a project undertaken by your company to contribute towards the ETI requirements. The ETI Score also impacts your overall BBEE rating.

How can it be done?

Once you have identified which organisation or social project to dedicate towards your CSR plans, simply engage with training providers and eLearning Learner Management technology providers to get started. Your organisation will purchase the pre-determined licenses and provide such service to your chose CSR project. The deployment and management will be handled by the services provider as part of your CSR on going commitment.



eLearning - The Skills Development contribution Plan



THE eLEARNING SOLUTION

Staff focus:

Investing in an eLearning solution for the purpose of upskilling your staff is a no brainer. As we mentioned the benefits of implementing eLearning in your organisation earlier in this eGuide, corporate eLearning is fast becoming the training go-to method. By providing your staff with on-going training programmes, you will be able to reap the benefits of purchasing eLearning technology for this purpose.

Recent changes in South African taxation laws requires all businesses who are registered with SARS for employees' tax purposes to also be registered with SARS for skills development, irrespective of whether they are excluded from paying the levy. Further changes in the BEE codes stipulates that all companies must comply to all elements of the BEE scorecard with skills development one of the three priority elements. A lot of focus is therefore placed on skills development for businesses across all industries.

Learnership Program Focus:

Most companies invest in the initiative of hosting learnerships and acquire anywhere from 10 - 300 learners in each hosted learnership. Of course, simply hosting a learnership program opens a plethora of BBEE and Tax rebate benefits. Once again, having an eLearning system in place will already provide you with the necessary tools to conduct this practise. Simply put: Learnerships + the equipment = Qualification for BBEE and Tax rebates.

The benefit:

- If you contract an accredited private service provider your business can claim the full cost of the service provider as part of your training spend versus only 15% of the spend for in-house training.

- An employer who is exempt from paying skills development levies can still deduct the skills levy.
- Skills development grants
- Substantial tax allowances when you implement Learnerships in your company.
- Increase/maintained BBEE scorecard rating



The purpose of the above conceptual ideas is to show organisations who either do have an existing eLearning platform or are thinking about implementing one, the various ways investing in eLearning can be used to benefit your organisation and help you do what counts, which is to get to your bottom line! It's rare to find a product you can utilise in various ways and reap different benefits and as we have shown you, eLearning technology can solve more than just an education need.

Privacy and control

Financial organizations have all kind of internal procedures and training material to use, and not all of it should ever be outside of the company.

With internet based eLearning you can deploy your courses in a tightly controlled manner, providing fine-grained access only to the right employees and securing the whole set-up behind your company's firewall or VPN.

And for financial organizations operating in multiple cities, countries, offices and branches, an Learning Management System allows you to deliver training to all your locations from a single deployment, that your IT department can easily manage, monitor and secure.

Staying up to date

The financial industry is not a static environment. In fact it's perhaps the most dynamic sector of the so called knowledge based economy, with each day and week bringing unique challenges and changes (especially in areas such as compliance training).

When it comes to training, this means that a lot of the learning material has to change frequently to adapt to new developments.

This is another area were eLearning beats classroom based classes that need printed textbooks, specialized instructors and a predefined lesson schedule.

Central, web based, deployment makes updating eLearning material quick and painless, and compatibility with third party and external sources means that all kinds of pre-packages and already available content can be incorporated to your eLearning courses in a heartbeat.

Employee Onboarding

Employee orientation or onboarding, the task of introducing new hires to their working environment and giving them the basic information they need to start being productive, is another great fit for eLearning and eFront.

This includes your organization's operating procedures, policies, restrictions, compliance regulations and guidelines, as well as the ever more important education in professional ethics, and sexual and racial discrimination issues.

Looking back at the Bidvest Bank eLearning journey, the bank solved numerous onboarding related challenges using their aNewSpring eLearning system. Bidvest Bank added a course that changed the bank's culture, the "Backpackers Guide to Bidvest Bank" an employee onboarding program. The aNewSpring platform was the perfect solution to streamline their induction process. The guide contains everything a new employee would need, from policy documentation, descriptions of all departments, to a welcome video from the Exco team. "With our entire onboarding material in one easily streamlined format, this made a tedious process more manageable and productive". Said Lisa Gallon.

Training Insight

The last major benefit of eLearning we'll cover in this post is that it gives managers and decision makers quick and comprehensive insight over the status and progress of your organization's training programs.

Instead of delivering seminars to your employees and hoping for the best, or waiting for some instructor to grade and deliver employee progress reports at the end of the learning period, with eLearning you get automated and fast insights on how your employees are doing and how well your training material has been absorbed.

aNewSpring, for example, includes advanced reporting capabilities that enable supervisors and management to keep track of courses, groups of learners and even the learning progress of specific employees, across all of your organization's departments and branches.

Travel And Accommodation

In-person classrooms require both the trainees and trainers to travel to a pre-determined location in order to conduct a training session. Businesses are typically faced with incurring this travel cost on behalf of their employees and pay for it from their training and development budgets. In case of eLearning, however, no such costs need to be incurred since the staff can tune in to the training session from the comfort of their home or work station.

As an example, McDonald's was able to save 5 million pounds over the course of two years with their Business Controls eLearning, along with witnessing a 10% sales growth directly attributable to the training.

Meal Costs

Snack and meal breaks are quite common during the long training sessions, the cost of which is typically incurred by the business for their trainees and facilitators. However, this expense can also be eliminated if training workshops and classes are conducted online.

Venue Rental/Meeting Room Maintenance

It is a common understanding that in-person classroom training requires a proper physical space to carry out the event. What we often see in the field is that a small business that doesn't have appropriate training facilities might need to rent a separate venue to execute the training program successfully. If the company already has spare space which it can utilize, it will still need to incur some form of maintenance cost to make the environment meet its training requirements.

Time Spent Away From Work

Classroom training requires the instructor and attendees to leave their workplaces, which can have an impact on the business's productivity. Furthermore, much time is wasted on moving employees from one spot to another—time that can otherwise be utilized on productive work. In contrast, eLearning allows employees to attend their training sessions right from their desks, which can save a lot of time and hassle.

Instructors/Facilitators' Salaries

This is a simple truth: Staff trainers and facilitators need to be paid. Moreover, instructors themselves will also need to be trained, which in turn requires time and money.

Printing Costs

With eLearning, businesses can save a great deal on printing materials since all content can be hosted online without the need to be printed for each training session. For example, if the company decides to update a policy and wishes to inform its employees about the related changes, this can be easily achieved through a Learning Management System, or a link in an email without facing the need to print and distribute physical guides and manuals.

Besides eliminating numerous business expenses, eLearning has a lot more to offer. These benefits include enhanced reach and collaboration, improved learner engagement and retention, and overall better productivity. The fact that eLearning materials are accessible to employees throughout the day allows them to learn the subject at their own pace and in a comfortable setting.

Furthermore, unlike traditional in-person learning methods, eLearning encourages fast learners to complete their training sooner, which, in turn, helps improve productivity and save personal time.

In short, the long-term cost of eLearning is significantly lower as compared to in-person training because business can save money on employee and trainer travel, infrastructure and classroom maintenance, facilitators' salaries, documentation, and paper costs. eLearning expenses are usually a one-time occurrence since the same material can be used for multiple learning sessions.