



DECALOGUE OF ADVANTAGES OF BEING AN OPEN LEARNCONDUCTIVE SME

The Approach



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Labour Market in Touch

New non-routine skills via mobile game-based learning

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The Approach

“DECALOGUE OF ADVANTAGES OF BEING AN OPEN LEARNCONDUCTIVE SME”

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Labour market future in nutshell



The ability to learn more quickly than your competitors is, today, the only sustainable competitive advantage.

Today, more than ever, markets change rapidly and often unpredictably, and the next few years will see even further acceleration in this process. Companies who want to **remain competitive** must commit themselves to constantly innovating their products and services and developing a high-dynamic approach and implementation capability.

In today's workplace, **lifelong learning has become a fact of life**. As the European economy evolves to become more knowledge-based, a growing number of its citizens are turning to training in order to expand their skills, earning potential and career paths.

In the service sector, there is a clear tendency towards the broadening of the required skills portfolio at all occupational levels, linked to "non-routine" tasks. This reflects the growing demand from employers for transversal key competencies linked to "**non-routine skills**".

The **10 key competences needed for managing non routine tasks and situational cases at work**, as identified within the INTOUCH project desk research among European entrepreneurs, are the following ones:



Skill 1: Communication

Ability to express ideas and reflections clearly, to make contact easily and quickly with others and maintain relationships, to provide feedback and be tolerant to different customs and cultures.



Skill 2: Planning

Ability to define priorities, anticipate trends and recognize key stages that one should pass as well as methods that should be applied.



Skill 3: Conflict Management

Fairness and objectiveness in conflict situations, ability to act as a mediator and resolve conflicts.



Skill 4: Openness to change

Ability to take challenges, initiate and implement changes, to adapt to changing environments and take responsibility for change.



Skill 5: Decision Making

Ability to take responsibility for decisions taken, their timeframe, consequences and risks; ability to take and defend complex decisions and gather and assess relevant data.



Skill 6: Team work

Readiness to assist team members and nurture team spirit; ability to manage processes and people in teams, to coordinate general and individual goals and integrate differing opinions.



Skill 7: Flexibility

Using a flexible (but not conformist) style when interacting with other people; taking into account the attitudes and views of others; being able to understand and adopt the position of others; adapting to changing demands and conditions.



Skill 8: Strategic thinking

Ability to produce a clear and consistent picture of the long-term future; possessing a clear vision for the future; clearly defining key objectives; considering the company in relation to its external environment.



Skill 9 – Initiative

Self-confidence in identifying new opportunities, seeking out and implementing new activities.



Skill 10 - Learning improvement

Ability to apply knowledge in practice, improve professional knowledge and personal behaviours, to strive to learn more and to learn from own experience.

To meet the current and future market changes, the enterprises and their staff have to cope with them.

But many small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have **no knowledge and resources** to develop and implement sustainable training strategies and need powerful ways to innovate.

They have to deal with limited personnel, organisational and financial resources. They often **act alone in solving their “non routine” problems**, but do not find efficient solutions. The situation is furthermore stimulated by the difficulty to formulate detailed training strategies that will enable their employees to cope with unforeseeable situations.

Today’s successful companies that consolidate and develop are all characterised by their ability to “reinvent” themselves. In synthesis, this means activating a permanent learning process throughout the company. Actually, the **workplace is the best site for many people to develop their skills**, develop the motivation and confidence to persist with learning, and get on better at work.

SMEs require an **improving of corporate learning** to assure a fast transfer of knowledge, to meet their needs of flexibility, to be oriented to their business and be easier integrated into their workflow with a suitable personalized content at a lower cost to the organization.

SME’s have to develop new organisational structures for the implementation of cooperative and **collaborative forms of learning**. Learning at work does not always involve formal learning and much learning occurs through the social networks which people participate in during work. At the moment most SME’s implement isolated learning solutions that do not touch the needs of cooperative and collaborative forms of working and learning.

Learning should not take place besides work but with work. Learning at the workplace is different from learning at school and in seminars. It is not important to go through a subject matter systematically but to

solve problems resulting out of practical application. A problem occurs during work flow and has to be addressed directly without the detour of a complicated general further education.

Therefore **flexible learning media are needed**. Enterprises have to develop a “learning culture” where ICT-based-learning does not mean the same as playing games on the computer but is honoured as self development and therefore strengthening the company.

In the following we present some ICT-based suitable environments for SMEs to share knowledge with different professionals and “**to learn as you go**”, that means sharing the various experiences and perspectives of the resources involved in order to elaborate new, innovative company solutions and models.

These environments can easily implement **problem solving** without involving units, managers or other channels of command/structural barriers, relying on each employee being aware of each other’s strengths. Learning and creative processes are speed up by matching creative people with each other.

In particular the combination of **Mobile learning** with Web 2.0 **e-How** for improving collaboration, communication and effectiveness of work is seen as very useful for SMEs.

These technologies are based on the idea that learning takes place in distributed networks of people. Content and services are adaptable and responsive to specific needs and goals of SMEs.

The INTOUCH products make use of mobile learning and e-How for **bringing mobile learning into SMEs everyday settings** and improve interaction and collaboration, providing SMEs employees with key skills they need to answer to labour market requests and to deal with the transformations taking place in the economy.

Mobile-learning games

An Open learning environment with much greater interest for adults because of the extensive use of **working scenarios and of dynamic interactive pages**.

m-Learning, through its flexibility and facility of access is seen as an enabler of lifelong learning having the potential to transform how and when employees learn to satisfy their work and life needs, as a catalyst of change and integration.

Become competitive. The m-learning kit

INTOUCH

Intouch provides a kit of **30 goal oriented situational m-Learning lessons** for working adults, downloadable via the project website, to be attended via mobile touch technology/smart phones.

Through 30 situational learning cases adult workers can **easily learn how to promptly answer to non routine situations at work**, thus to the new exigencies of the labour market. This Open learning environment has much greater interest for adults - because of the extensive use of working scenarios and of dynamic interactive games for mobile phones.



Advantages include:



1. Inbuilt competitive aspect

They enable users to compete to create a challenge and therefore create an incentive.



2. Flexible/mobile

Users are able to use the games anywhere and at any time. The game can be used at work or at home or even on the way to work/home, for a good use of time.



3. No cost of training or kit

The game is simple to use and therefore no training is needed, or any special equipment as it can be used on a mobile phone.



4. Relevant, interactive and fun

The games have examples that are relevant to the user. They are enjoyable and interesting. And this makes people want to do it as it is relevant to them.



5. Current/multilingual

Because the game is used on a mobile device it can easily be updated and is therefore current. The user can pick the language they would prefer to use.

e-How: flexible and open space for cooperative learning

An online community and a wiki for **sharing ideas on how to use skills** for personal and organisational benefits among SMEs employees.

Providing employees with the possibility to be in contact with a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, an expertise or a passion for a topic can make the difference.

e-HOW, which has a clear focus on the community, gives a natural support for personal and group informal learning in SMEs by **simplifying tasks like research, working and learning in groups**. For example writing in a public blog forces to think about the corresponding issues. By putting this out to a community, input from peers and help from a network of individuals to learn and solve problems in the future will be received.

e-How for cooperative learning.



Intouch offers an online community dedicated to providing EU employees with the ability to research, share, and discuss **instructional solutions that help complete day-to-day non-routine tasks**. It combines the experiential knowledge with the practical knowledge of everyday employees to help them discuss, plan, and complete unpredictable things at work.

By networking management of non-routine situations will become easier. Working adults have the possibility to accede to proper and pertinent information in terms of **situational solutions adopted by others**, but also to share their own good practices uploading photos and instructions.

The library contains contributions from people who've figured out how to complete a variety of non-routine tasks, simple and complex, and are willing to share their knowledge. This e-How promotes cooperative learning bringing **easy ways to connect European employees** who are looking to share, discuss and learn how to achieve everyday projects.

Advantages include:



1. Need-based faster learning

e-HOW is based on tools that combine creation of content easily with Web delivery and collaboration. Contents are delivered in small pieces over time as part of a large process which corresponds to the needs of SME staff for a faster learning in the context of their work.



2. Vast amount of resources readily available

The Internet not only makes readily available a vast amount of information and resources, but brings people together in a shared environment to exchange ideas, learn and engage in collaborative decision making.



3. People and Information accessed anytime

Using ICT such as Internet to support the virtual ongoing interactions frees their member of time and space and are convenient also for people with special needs. E-How's are places where people and information can be accessed anytime.



4. Innovative Ideas for problem solving

Through different expertise and knowledge of the participants, their innovative ideas can contribute to more effective problem solving and decision making.



5. Less inhibition

People feel less inhibited in their interactions and this is particularly important for people who learn. Moreover, learning is real. Learning based on actual, not theoretical, models specific to the company and its human resources.

Conclusion

Becoming an open learnconductive SME will position your business as **an employer of choice**, resulting in a higher calibre of employees applying for roles and increased staff retention.

Opportunities for learning and advancement usually result in **higher job satisfaction and productivity**.

Workplace learning is associated with improvements in productivity, higher levels of innovation, and better financial performance. Despite business's fears of more highly trained staff being poached by competitors, the evidence points in the opposite direction: individuals who receive workplace training tend to be less likely to leave, **reducing staff turnover**.

Some extra advantages of **being an open learnconductive SME** can be resumed as follows:

- ⊖ Reduction in transport expenditure
- ⊖ Means of not moving users from their work place
- ⊖ Identification of paths
- ⊖ Possibility of access for employed users
- ⊖ Flexibility in training resources
- ⊖ Better learning
- ⊖ Cost saving
- ⊖ Time saving.



INTOUCH provides the new generation of working adults with **flexible and modular pathways**, enabling them to develop their **crucial non routine skills** – in a labour market oriented way, in a flexible way, and in a technological innovative way – according to the **new exigencies of the labour market**.