

**DIGITAL EDUCATION OF EMPLOYEES  
AS A NEW TREND IN THE CORPORATE FORMATION**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to analyse the evolution of online methods of education, digitalization of corporate educational programs, and to identify the impact of recent changes at the quality and speed of the employees' formation.

The authors use the sources that reveal the main trends in corporate education along with doing the comparative analysis of the open sources (international scientific views in regards to online and blended education, practical examples of programs), and apply the own empirical experience. The integral analysis of theory and practice allows creating the new knowledge in understanding of benefits and limitations of such education, by developing the corresponding recommendations for the companies' management.

Along with the innovative methods of education, which received a qualitatively new impetus thanks to the development of the Internet, mobile communications and digital presentation technologies, the innovative management technologies for improving the efficiency of the corporate training are now on the spotlight.

The authors identified such global trends in approach to online education as on-the-job trainings, corporate storytelling, Micro- and Macro-education, interval and hybridity as characteristics of modern digital learning, personalization and customization of corporate education, combination of familiar tools of the offline teaching with digital.

The new technologies are being actively incorporated into corporate trainings and universities.

The authors made the analysis of the evolution of online methods of education and of the Digital learning as the most recent trend in online education and its applicability to the corporate world. A number of companies started to integrate it into the corporate training programs. These technologies bring a number of benefits to companies' employees formation as well as complement to the trend of distant / homework, while have a few

issues that should be taken into consideration by the companies' management.

This study helps to systematize the conceptual and practical knowledge of the companies and professionals involved into the development and implementation of the modern educational solutions, and to develop the corresponding recommendations.

**Keywords:** digital education, corporate universities, on-the-job trainings

### **Introduction**

The human capital becomes the one of the dominating factors of the innovative development nowadays, and the success of companies depends on the quality of this capital formation. The fourth technological revolution, which is rapidly gaining the momentum, leads to a gradual revision of the basic paradigm and models of education, especially in B2B segment: the world of corporate training significantly expands its borders. The rapid growth in business education in the last two decades and the rapid development of the corporate universities around the world make the analysis of the new strategies and technologies of digital education especially relevant.

The experts have been trying to apply the digital technologies to a corporate training for over 30 years already. From video to CD, then to e-learning on YouTube and other digital resources, the companies have gone through a rapid change in learning and development technologies. With the emergence of the digital content and tools, the business education programs are being rethought for a digital access. To meet the requirements of the digital world the corporate universities have to “reinvent themselves” by quickly moving from the regular focus on managing the learning process to managing the educational experience of their target audience, which now has access to the various channels of knowledge and skills with expectations of personalized, adaptive and 24/7 format of interaction (Volkov, D.L., Katkalo, V.S., 2018).

### **Methodology**

The authors use the studies of the open scientific sources, companies' examples as well as the own empirical experience. The comparative analysis of the theory and the practical data allows building the new knowledge in development of digital B2B.

### **Discussion and Findings**

#### ***Evolution of educational online platforms.***

The very first online education appeared in 1998. 2000s became the launch time for the first blended courses and business schools, as well as corporate e-learning programs (see Table 1).

**Table 1 - Evolution of online Learning & Development**

	<b>1998-2002</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Platform</b>	<b>E-learning &amp; Blended</b>	<b>Talent Management</b>	<b>Continuous Learning</b>	<b>Digital Learning</b>	<b>Intelligent Learning</b>
Formats	Course catalogue, Online University	Learning path, Career track	Video, Self-authored Mobile, YouTube	Micro-learning, Real time video, Courses everywhere	Intelligent, Personalized, Machine driven
Users	Self-study	Career focused	Learning on demand	Everyone, all the time, everywhere	
Systems	LMS as e-learning platform	LMS as Talent platform	LMS as Experience platform	LMS invisible data driven, mobile	

*Source: created based on Bersin, J., 2017.*

It further transformed into Talent management platforms and Corporate Universities with continues learning, complemented by the Digital learning in 2017.

Among the popular professional development tools for employees, it is important to mention the open LMS platforms (Learning Management System). One of them, Udemy, founded in 2010, offers more than 100,000 high-quality courses. There are more than 30 thousand teachers on this platform, 65 thousand courses in more than 50 languages, with geography covering more than 190 countries. Customers include Apple, Volkswagen, Mercedes, Barclays, T-Mobile, PayPal, Booking.com, PayPal, Pinterest, Deloitte. Among other companies with LMS-platform specializing at outsourced professional development of employees are EdModo and Moodle.

However, the main recent trend is the transition towards the Digital learning. This training system has been introduced in online education of the largest business schools, for example, IE business school with blended MBA programs, No. 2 by ranking of FT (Online MBA ranking 2019), moving to domain of virtual reality with their newly created “Wow room”. “The Wow Room will break with the traditional onsite, blended and online education models to transform the learning experience through elements that include artificial intelligence, simulations in real time, big data analysis, interactive robots, emotion recognition systems, and the presence of experts using holograms” (IE Wow Room, 2017).

Such technologies allow reaching the best experts, and accessing the

knowledge and technologies without the need for travel and without the break in work. Education takes place in the evening and during weekends. Another advantage of such trainings lies in possibility to communicate with professionals from different countries and industries, to exchange experiences, to improve language skills, to enhance the understanding of methods for remote individual and teamwork, which is important in the light of the transition to partial or fulltime homework. Students use for communication such platforms as Slack, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts and Google Drive, Dropbox. However, the downside of blended education is excessive workload (working 15-16 hours a day, seven days a week, for 1-2 years), which leads to fatigue and, as a result, to decrease in work results, in quality of material understanding, and to the absence of personal life (which is especially problematic for the couples with children).

Nevertheless, such programs open the door to additional education and advanced training for highly qualified professionals who cannot afford to study in isolation from work.

There are **several global trends in approach to online corporate trainings**, which manifest themselves in Russia:

1. The companies provide to employees the opportunities for effective **“on-the-job” learning** with the use of digital tools. Thus, the educational function of employees is transformed from additional to a full-fledged work function with appropriate system of evaluation, guidance and remuneration.
2. **Corporate storytelling** as the transmission of stories from the companies’ life into digital education helps to consolidate their adopted patterns of behavior and more adequately perceive the new information by employees. The experts are educated via “software experience platforms”: training takes place in a modern cloud structure, which is effective for programs such as sales training, development, onboarding, and many others.
3. **Gamification** facilitates the learning process, by making it fascinating. The most interesting tools today are the ones related to the artificial intelligence and machine learning systems, as well as virtual reality (Nosov, N.Y., Sokolov, M.D., 2016).
4. Researchers identify **Micro- and Macro-education** as two types of modern corporate training. According to Josh Bersin, Micro-training is not a format, but a learning style or method more suitable for experts than for beginners, Micro-education is the learning of the new content, helping to solve the problem right now, in a few minutes. Macro-formation is a systematic education of the new areas for quite a long time. Micro-learning sites are YouTube and Instagram, as well as Grovo, Axonify, Qstream, Pathgather and Edcast. Macro-learning sites include Coursera, Udacity, EdX, Udemy, BigThink, Lynda.com, SkillSoft, General Assembly,

Pluralsight, CrossKnowledge and hundreds of others (Bersin J., 2017).

“Thanks to a new breed of corporate learning tools like “experience platforms”, a new breed of “micro-learning platforms”, modernized LMS systems, and new AI-based systems, HR tech can now recommend learning, find learning, and deliver learning” (Mulkeen, D., 2018).

5. **Interval and hybridity** as characteristics of modern digital learning can also be considered as trends (Yurchenko, 2018). Interval digital training is a new format of the corporate training where the new skills are acquired and knowledge occurs with interruptions and staged control in the process of learning on the principle of “repetition, interval, survey”, which corresponds to the psychological laws of information perception. Hybrid training involves the combination of self-study of materials online with the exchange of experience and knowledge with the "classmates".

6. The trends of **personalization and customization of corporate education** suggest that the training of each employee must be unique, with each employee having his own level of basic and additional education, his personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. Customization as a common business term involves bringing the product and individual characteristics in line with the actual needs of the client (Volkov, D.L., Katkalo, V.S., 2018: 79).

7. The **combination of familiar tools of the offline teaching with digital** in corporate education gives a synergistic effect today. Coaching, educational culture, motivation systems, tested in pre-digital education continue to be the most important factors of the educational process, making it more and more effective.

**Corporate education programs and universities** have a long tradition in big corporations. Some of them even run the open tutoring systems. For example, the Japanese IT giant Fujitsu has created its own open educational platform Fisdome (Matsunaga, Y., 2018: 16). Open Online University is a Professional University of P&G, launched the two years ago where Procter & Gamble offers about 100 courses and training videos. The platform has the user-friendly interface: the site is structured according to various branches.

Following the major trend of digitization, **the corporate universities in their turn are undergoing the transformation**, introducing new technologies into their practice. A number of companies have already begun **the introduction of digital learning**.

One of the world leaders in corporate trainings is McDonald’s. The famous Hamburger University (McDonald’s Corporation-Worldwide Training, Learning & Development (WWTL&D) was established in 1961, since then has trained the 80,000 (Hamburger University, 2019).

The virtual university of another global company “Coca-Cola”, called Coca-Cola University (CCU), offers training both “live” and remotely, using the digital technologies. The training programs include courses in marketing, finance, ethics, and human rights. Tens of thousands of people pass the Electronic courses CCU annually (that is almost 2,000 classes worldwide), and including the non- Coca-Cola employees (Associate Training, 2019).

Toyota Connect is a well-known corporate LMS system has involved into training more than 20,000 automakers, by offering a wide range of diverse programs for both technical specialists and managers. Toyota Connect, includes access to frequently updated e-learning modules, content management tools, online registration, assessment tracking and an integrated user-friendly authoring tool to develop unique regional content (Gale, S.F., 2018).

According to RBC rating, since 2015 Sberbank is recognized an undisputed leader of the corporate education in Russia, by getting the Grand Prix 2018 for their corporate university achievements (International ratings and rewards, 2018). The educational model of Sberbank includes more than 60 programs: the bank managers are involved in teaching along with the specialists from leading business schools.

Among the Russian corporations, active in organization of corporate universities and educational functions, it is worth to mention such leading companies as Euroset, Gazpromneft, MTS, Rosatom and Alfabank.

### **Conclusion**

The conducted analysis allowed to identify the major trends in approach to online education and applicability of these trends to the corporate education, including the emerging trend of the Digital education, that was already taken on board by a number of international corporations.

The online education evolves very rapidly by moving the 4 stages during the last 10 years. However, the corporations successfully adopt most of existing technologies, including the latest trend of Digital learning by offering to their employees the level of education, very close to the best business schools.

The Digital learning provides the companies with a plenty of benefits while bringing a few issues that should considered by the companies’ management in planning of employees’ education by using the personalized approach.

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