



DUTCH EMPLOYERS COOPERATION PROGRAMME



E-LEARNING WITH IMPACT

10 golden rules to get started

EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS ARE NOW DISCOVERING THE USE OF DIGITAL MEANS WITH THE AIM OF ACHIEVING THE SAME EFFECT OF TRAINING, OR EVEN MORE.

BUT THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY. USING ZOOM, TEAMS OR SKYPE REQUIRES DIFFERENT SKILLS AND METHODS THAN WE ARE USED TO. DECP HAS LISTED THE MOST IMPORTANT PRACTICAL RULES IN THIS REPORT.

WHAT CAN YOU DO DURING COVID-TIMES AND LATER?

DECP GIVES YOU A HAND

Summary: Ten golden rules for e-learning in brief

1. Always communicate your message, your goals in e-learning 3 times: before and during the course and as a summary afterwards
2. Give the participants the opportunity to prepare for the course by informing them well in advance about objectives and approach
3. Limit the size of the complete group to be trained to a maximum of 25 participants
4. Divide the complete course over a longer period. This has a greater and more sustainable effect than an uninterrupted programme
5. Limit the contact moments to three within a timeframe of three hours. Split the course into digestible chunks, taking into account the attention curve
6. Develop a tight schedule in which moments of instruction are limited to 20 minutes. These moments are alternated with assignments that are done offline in teams of 5 participants
7. Offer a variety of learning methods in which the participants themselves are active as much as possible
8. About evaluation: Make sure that individual and/or group assignments are evaluated together in the next contact moment (a). Evaluate individually a few weeks after finishing the training course (b)
9. A basic IT infrastructure including hardware, software and internet facilities should be available at the location of both the learning coach and the learners
10. All participants, and the learning coach in particular, should be aware of the most important functions of the software and be able to operate the programme

Preface for decision makers in employers' and business members' organisations

Digitalisation: miracle cure or Trojan horse?

In early 2020 did you know Zoom? Or Microsoft Teams? No? Fair chance you do now. Amongst other digital means of communication.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown companies, organisations, governments and individuals possibilities hitherto unimagined. 'Meet' people on the other side of the globe and actually see them. Have group discussions with people who are in 15 different places. Or 30. Address a crowd from your desk with the help of a camera, a microphone and the world wide web.

Within a few months the world of meeting, discussing, exchanging ideas, teaching and learning has undergone a digital revolution. Avoiding travel costs and saving the precious time of travelling, promises huge gains in *productivity, efficiency and sustainability*. The question remains whether digitalisation of trainings is also the most *effective* way of reaching your objectives.

Not in all cases. As well as a miracle cure, digitalisation of trainings can be a Trojan horse, ready to spread confusion and misunderstanding.

In order to use digital means of communications and replacing physical learning decision makers should ask themselves some questions. These are some aspects to keep in mind.

1. What is the objective of the interaction?

Is the objective to inform a group of people, to pass on knowledge? Or do you want them to gain deeper insights, thus developing their knowledge competences and skills? Is the objective to change someone's attitude?

The rule of thumb is here: the more complex the thinking process for the recipient, the less suitable digital means become and the more favourable face to face interaction.

2. What is the nature of the interaction?

Is the interaction supposed to be a real discussion, like a brainstorm, or is it more of a speech? Is feedback – e.g. in the form of body language - a bonus or a necessity?

The more important your personal interventions will be in order to be successful, the more you have to rely on face to face communication. The more complex the interaction process the more suitable face to face communication.

3. How many people will be involved?

Digital means provide a better base for small group discussions than for large group interventions. But they provide a really good means for addressing large groups, the internet providing a platform for a broadcast like TV.

4. What is the duration of the interaction?

People tend to get distracted after 9 minutes in average. The risk of attendees doing other things while attending a digital meeting and not participating are severe. The longer the interacting will take, the bigger the risk of becoming ineffective. Can you plan more than one session, like in a course? Then a blended formula – partly digital, partly physical - may be the right option.

5. Who are the others?

It is easier to interact through digital means with people you know well than with strangers.

6. Who are you?

Not everyone is yet a master at using digital tools. It may take several steps, a bit of time and possibly some training before you can deliver through digital means what you have delivered face to face for many years.

Chances are the outcome of your decision making process will be to strive for an optimum, using both digital and face to face communication.

Digitalisation: today's reality in the short term

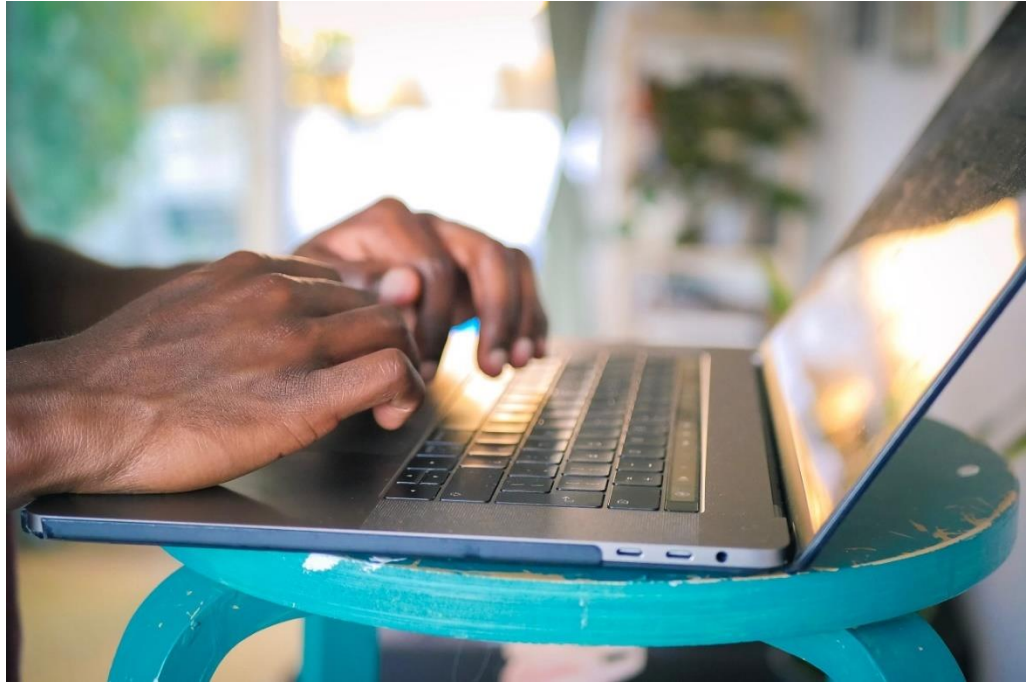
As long as COVID-19 rules the world, only "online" courses can be offered. We all will have to deal with the limitations of digital teaching and learning. And try to minimize them.

It is for sure that the optimal situation would be to explore the training needs of members in detail, to develop a learning management system and to set up a professional training department. But, don't lose too much time! The COVID crisis simply doesn't allow in-depth research. We therefore advice to make a start with obvious issues related to COVID, like avoiding spreading the virus, creating safe workplaces, organising distance work if possible and maintaining productivity and economic activities. The organisation as well as the moderators should learn by doing. Immediate action is better than perfection.

Therefore, DECP developed 10 golden rules. As a guideline for those moderators that want to start as soon as possible conducting training courses for their members. The main starting point is that e-teaching is not the same as webinars (see introduction).

What are the main challenges to deal with? How to reach the individual learner without being in the same classroom? How to get the best out of it? We did not conduct scientific research to set up this guideline. For studying further in-depth insights we highly recommend to read the 'Guide on training methodology for EBMOs' recently published by ITCILO and DECP, 2020. (see 'sources'). On the contrary, we asked others to share their experiences, did some desk research and -last but not least- we gathered quite some experience ourselves over the last couple of months.

Get inspired and get started. And please let us know your experiences. We are looking forward to learn from them and share them with other employers' organisations!



Introduction

DECP, a Netherlands' programme to assist employers' and business organisations (EBMO's) in over 20 developing economies (www.decp.nl), has closely followed the developments in EBMOs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Several employers' organisations have successfully set up a series of webinars. This allows them to reach a large number of participants. Webinars allow employers' organisations to increase their visibility, to offer interesting content and to present experts, including panel discussions. A good summary completes the activity. But in general, interaction is poor. Which makes webinars less suitable for training activities.

Webinars in brief:

- Reach a large number of participants
- Present experts, their field of expertise, panel discussions
- Increase visibility
- Have very limited interaction

This guide focusses on online training activities, where the number of participants is limited and frequent interaction with the participants is highly recommended in order to achieve sustainable results. After all, training has to do with a relationship between the learning coach and the learner. The learning coach has to understand the motivation of the learner. What can be done to encourage the learner to learn? What can be done to encourage the learner to apply what he/she has learned? How does a training activity contribute to the performance of the organisation where the learner is employed? In all cases, the learner himself is responsible for his learning activities.

Not only employers' organisations try to find solutions for this kind of questions. Schools, training institutes and other experts all over the world have been training online, increasingly since the outbreak of the corona crisis. Because there was no alternative. Therefore, a lot of experience has been gained. Now already, a lot of (scientific) publications are available. For employers' organisations they sometimes miss their mark. DECP believes that an easily accessible guide is closer to everyday practice. And that it allows you to quickly start your first online course or improve your existing activities in the field of distance teaching.

Training in brief:

- The basic question is: what can the learning coach and the learner do to turn what has been learned into practice, to make work more easy and satisfactory and to contribute to the performance of the organisation?
- Knowledge transfer, opinion forming and behavioural change start with a personal relationship.
- The learning coach should have frequent interaction with the learners
- The learning coach has to understand the motivation of the learner and the environment he is working in

- The learner himself is responsible for his learning activities.

By sharing observations and by making recommendations, DECP hopes to contribute to the continuous improvement of EBMOs, not only in a general sense but particularly in crisis situations.



Some employers' organisations are now experimenting with distance training. We can call it e-training or e-teaching from an employers' organisations point of view. We can call it e-learning from the learners point of view. Their experiences will help ensure that when the impact of COVID-19 has diminished, distance learning will open up new opportunities for developing services to members.

E-learning certainly offers possibilities. But, just like good teaching practice, teaching through ZOOM, TEAMS or other platforms also requires specific skills. And limitations have to be taken into account.

How can we best deal with e-learning, later perhaps in combination with face to face training, also called blended learning? DECP collected the most important practical insights. Hopefully this guide will help you on your way to training in the new normal.

10 GOLDEN RULES FOR E-LEARNING

1. Always communicate your message, your goals in e-learning 3 times: before and during the course and as a summary afterwards

Every training or teaching effort starts with the end in mind. What should the learner know at the end of the training? What should he or she now be able to do? How to apply in practice what the learner has learned? Who benefits from that and how?

If the learner is not aware of the course objectives the learning coach will have a hard time to motivate and stimulate the learner. Different expectations most probably lead to unsatisfactory results and disappointment.

It is basically about the learner, not about the teacher. A teacher can be satisfied if he has shown all the slides he or she prepared. But the learner still might be confused at the end of the day.

Explain the learning objectives repeatedly; before the course, during the course and as a summary afterwards.

2. Give the participants the opportunity to prepare for the course by informing them well in advance about objectives and approach

E-learning might be new for you. Participants as well have to get used to it. You can help them by offering all information they need to get well prepared. This information should be sent to them well ahead. It contains information about the time schedule, the fact that they will be working in small teams and have direct contact with you -their learning coach- at several moments during the course. And about the kind of instructions you give and assignments which they will have to do (see rule 6). In order not to discourage them explain that the course is divided into several days and that each day will last not more than four hours (see rule 8).

Besides that, information about the learning objectives is a must. But that step is no different from classroom teaching and the preparations that go with it. The step of preparation allows you to ask searching questions about the goals they want to achieve, their background, function and specific tasks. The participants can also do some assignments that give you an impression of their motivation and knowledge level. Good preparation increases the chance of a successful course.

3. Limit the size of the complete group to be trained to a maximum of 25 participants

A webinar offers the possibility to reach out to a large number of people. Some webinars offered by employers' organisations do have over 300 participants! But interaction is poor or even non-existent. You can compare this with a lecture at the university.



Divided into small teams (virtually)

A large number of students can be in the auditorium, listening and taking notes, but it is hard to ask a question, let alone to work actively on assignments in small groups. It might be attractive to invite as many people as you can to your e-learning course. But this is not the right thing to do. It is a one-way street which does not open the door to discussions, sharing experiences and adjustment of the course if necessary.

We therefore advise to limit the number of participants, let's say to a maximum of 25. And even then, after perhaps having done a first plenary introduction meeting, divide the group into small teams of 5 learners. They will be working together digitally during the course on assignments, preparing presentations and so on.

Technically you can cut the digital connexion for these moments and link again later. Modern digital platforms offer the functionality to apply breakout rooms and stay online.

See: <https://techcommunity.microsoft.com/t5/microsoft-teams-community-blog/how-to-do-breakout-rooms-in-microsoft-teams-a-real-life-example/bap/1506862>

4. Divide the complete course over a longer period. This has a greater and more sustainable effect than an uninterrupted programme

By following a set-up which is more like a modular approach in time, it is likely to have a greater lasting effect in which the student's environment is involved. The retention rate will be higher and the environment of the learner most probably

becomes aware of the development of knowledge, skills and, on the longer term, of attitude changes of the learner. This pays off in his/her contribution to the performance of the organisation.

By applying an e-teaching approach, the role of the teacher shifts slowly to the role of learning coach and tutor. After all, after finishing the 'official classes' one can imagine that the relationship between the learner and the learning coach just started. It will be far more easier for the learner to ask feedback from the learning coach while putting into practice what he or she has learned.

5. Limit the contact moments to three within a timeframe of three hours. Split the course into digestible chunks, taking into account the attention curve

It is difficult -if not impossible- for people to keep their attention while working online. Most probably, the attention curve is even shorter than in classroom situations. Therefore, a course which is 'normally' conducted in two consecutive days, can better be cut into digestible chunks and the learners can best be encouraged to be active instead of only sitting and listening.



6. Develop a tight schedule in which moments of instruction are limited to 20 minutes. These moments are alternated with assignments that are done offline in teams of 5 participants

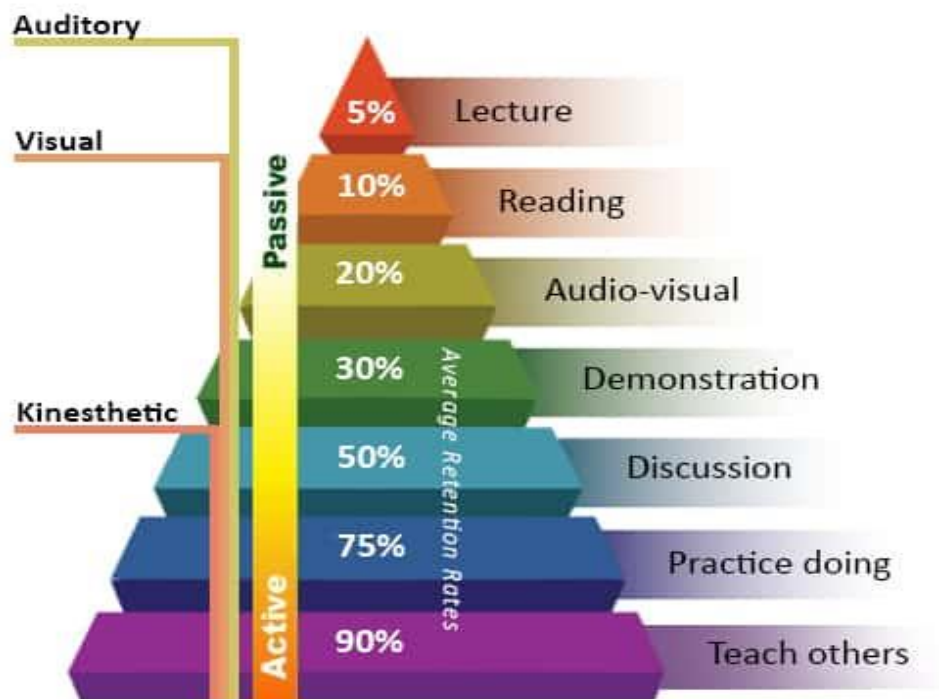
After the plenary meeting (see golden rule 3), you -as a learning coach- follow the tight schedule the participants were informed about in advance. And of course they are invited to these meetings by you through TEAMS, ZOOM or another software-programme you use. This schedule contains a series of short instruction moments with each of the small teams. These moments should take 15 to 20 minutes only. They allow you to have direct contact with the learners because the number of participants is restricted.

You finish this short meeting by sending them a team assignment, which you already prepared. The team will work on that for about 1 or 1,5 hours. In the meantime, you repeat this action with other teams.

This series of activities is therefore ready after about an hour and a half. During this time you will be available to answer questions by e-mail, phone or ZOOM, TEAMS, Skype. This interval allows you to take some time to evaluate for yourself the first step. Two hours after starting this process you repeat the series of meetings. The teams present their findings to you and ask your feedback.

7. Offer a variety of learning methods in which the participants themselves are active as much as possible

According to the learning pyramid of Bales, people learn more from doing activities themselves than from listening. <https://www.educationcorner.com/the-learning-pyramid.html>. As a learning coach you will have to explain the basics of a new topic. But the e-learning approach in particular allows you to develop assignments that



Adapted from the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science Learning Pyramid

Bales: the more active learners, the higher the retention rate

encourage the learners to discover examples and insights themselves. In addition, the participants will discuss the assignments with their teammates, which further enhances the learning effect.

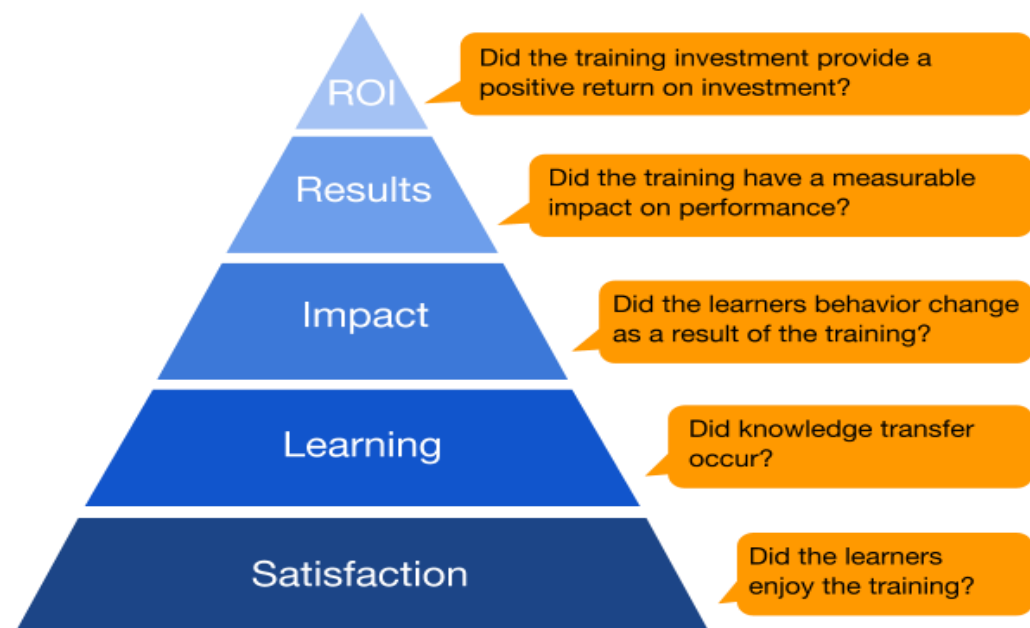
So, most probably, the set-up of your training course takes a lot of effort, but once the course takes place, most of the work will be done by the learners themselves. This approach can include goal-oriented questions, assignments to look for examples, the opinion of proponents and opponents, in-depth and alternative theories, cases and best practices, preparing a presentation and so on. You just have to make sure that your toolkit is complete.

It goes without saying that you evaluate your experiences and those of the participants during the course and adjust the assignments if necessary.

8. About evaluation: Make sure that individual and/or group assignments are evaluated together in the next contact moment (a). Evaluate individually a few weeks after finishing the training course (b)

Each assignment the learners work out during the interval should be evaluated in the next meeting with you. This way the learners get immediate feedback and you can correct them, explain why certain conclusions are correct or incorrect, and give new information to get prepared for the next assignment. By cutting the course in digestible chunks you can follow the progress of the small teams and adjust your programme if necessary by offering the most suitable next assignment, which is in line with their progress. After all, it is more effective to work out only 50% of what you prepared if this is matching the progress of the learners than to burdening them with an overkill of information that they no longer absorb.

The fact that the course is spread over several days not only allows the learners to digest what they have learned the first day, it allows you as well to evaluate in between and follow the progress of each individual participant. Adjustments can be made at any time and your course will be tailor made (a; evaluation in between).



Kirkpatrick evaluation model. What is the contribution to performance?

Courses are meant to transfer knowledge, develop skills and change attitudes. At a higher level we can say that courses are meant to make life of the learner easier because he/she is able to do a better job and to enjoy it. At the highest level of contemplation, training courses are building blocks that should finally contribute to a higher performance of the organisation. Investing in people should offer a clear return on investment.

As a teacher / trainer / learning coach it is not that easy to prove you contributed to the ROI. Questions to evaluate a training course at the end of the day don't reveal much of that. They only confirm that the participants had a good time, were inspired by the trainer and their fellow learners and most probably appreciated to have this new information. But does the learner really apply new knowledge and are they embedded in new behaviour? This can only be discovered over the weeks and months to come. Therefore, a complete training session-no matter how it is offered-will be of much more added value if the learner and the learning coach build up a (virtual) relation and change 'just a training' into a change programme (b; evaluation on the longer term). A virtual evaluation meeting with the team the learners have been working in might complete this type of evaluation.

9. A basic IT infrastructure including hardware, software and internet facilities should be available at the location of both the learning coach and the learners

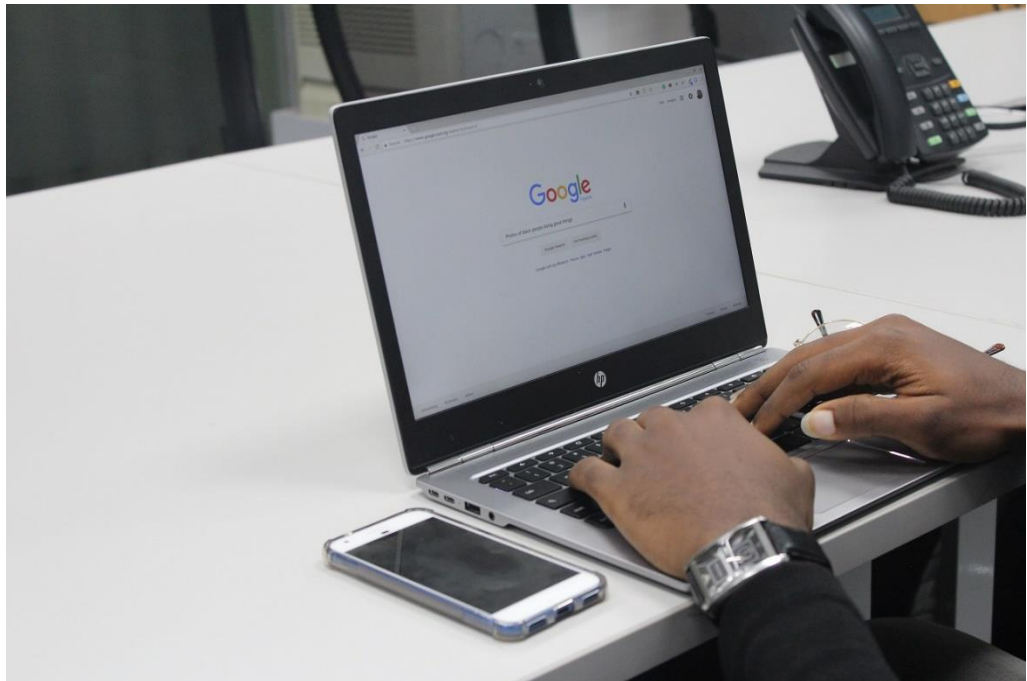
Distance teaching simply requires a basic IT infrastructure. It consists of hardware, software and a good connection to the internet. This goes for both the learning coach and the learners. Most offices have desktops, laptops, the right software and WIFI. Software programmes like ZOOM, TEAMS and Skype are quite often available as a standard. Before the coronavirus reached almost every country in the world, a lot of people were not aware of the possibilities of these programmes. In the EBMO-world they were not used or only every now and then. COVID-19 and the restrictions that came with it, encouraged organisations and individuals to intensify the use of these programmes. A digital teacher highly depends on the quality of this configuration. And quite often, things go wrong. It therefore is important to make sure you have up to date technology. Larger organisations often employ an IT administrator or computer expert. Make sure this colleague is involved in your training project to avoid nasty disturbances or to quickly solve problems that may occur during your training interventions. This allows you to concentrate on your core activity; teaching! Unfortunately, not all participants might have good equipment. The least you can do as a training course provider is to inform them about the minimum requirements.

10. All participants, and the learning coach in particular, should be aware of the most important functions of the software and be able to operate the programme

Like every software programme, programmes that support distance learning offer a lot of application possibilities. It is not always easy to oversee all possibilities, let

alone to use all available functions. But you don't have to if you discover at least the most important functions. Like; inviting learners, muting and unmuting microphones, composing groups, sharing presentations and so on. Of course, the software providers offer user manuals online. They can be the key to basic use or even advanced use. But in all cases it is useful to practice with colleagues who are nearby.

This allows you to repeat certain functions in order to get familiar with them and to discuss and discover together the functions you really need. Once you are a frequent and successful user, you can communicate the most important functions your learners should control. This could be part of the preparations as well. At least the first time. There is a lot to find out by yourself. If your organisation sees distance teaching as a strategic part of service development you can always consider to take an advanced course from the supplier.



Appendix: Sources, highly recommended

Return On Expectation Management (ROEM):

https://www.roem.be/roe_site_visie.asp?pg=11

Guide on training methodology for EBMOs, ITCILO and DECP, 2020

https://www.itcilo.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/EBMOS%20Guide_web.pdf

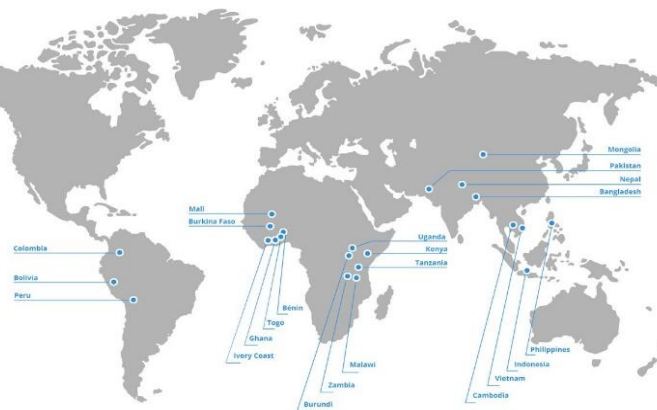
eLearning guideline. New Zealand Tertiary College, 2019

<http://www.elg.ac.nz/>

Appendix: About DECP

Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme (DECP) is a public-private partnership founded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dutch employers' organisations. Its aim is to create sustainable economic development in developing economies by strengthening the position of national employers' and business member organisations (EBMOs). In order to do so, DECP offers advice, shares experiences, and transfers knowledge through workshops and trainings to EBMO's in emerging countries.

DECP IS ACTIVE IN OVER 20 COUNTRIES



What can DECP do for your organisation?

DECP has 15 years of expertise in improving the operations of employers' organisations. By identifying critical success factors, DECP is able to advise employers' organisations in developing economies. Exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices are central through workshops and trainings. DECP consultants work in a demand-oriented way. The specific demands of the partner and the country-specific circumstances are decisive for making crucial choices.

DECP also follows this approach with regard to managing the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis for employers' organisations and their members. Successful and powerful actions and insights have been collected and made available via website www.decp.nl/corona-update.

Partners are challenged to develop effective short and long term actions. These proposals are reviewed and commented by a team of experts. Approved actions are financially supported by DECP. DECP experts provide remote support during the execution of these actions.

Colophon

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