

ING Belgium decides to spearhead its training policy with distance learning

IN BRIEF



The Challenge

With a view to building the skill base of its employees, ING Belgium has entirely revamped its training policy. The objective? To develop a flexible solution combining traditional teaching and on-line sessions so as to reach record participation rates.

ING Belgium

A financial services company, ING is especially known for its banking solutions and products. The Belgian branch also handles insurance, offers asset management and is specialised in leasing and real estate. Each entity strives, in its specific field, to offer its clients products as well as general and consultancy services of the very first order.



► With a view to developing business, ING Belgium plans to revamp its training policy and methods by gradually introducing distance learning for its 14,000 employees.

The ING group, an international financial institution with operations in 50 countries, boasts more than 120,000 employees throughout the world and offers banking, insurance and asset management services and products to over 75 million clients (private individuals, families, small and large businesses, institutions, governmental bodies, etc.). With a view to ensuring its position as a financial institution of reference and to prepare for the future, the Belgian subsidiary of the Group strives to constantly evolve with regard to both its processes and to the building of its employees' skill base.

With this in mind, the financial group has taken on new structural and strategic challenges for the short, medium and long terms. The Learning and Development Department has been tasked with developing HR objectives, which are then broken down into training objectives. For instance, business development (a strategic objective) demands good performance at the managerial level (an HR objective), which in turn means an assessment/return on investment with regard to training (a training objective).

A fresh look at learning methods

"In order to help the company evolve, the Learning and Development department decided to completely revise its conception of training as well as its methods", explains Hendrik Geleyte, Manager Development Advise within the department. A total overhaul of the company's training programs was necessary in order to bring them in line with internal changes, especially with the development of new technology. "We were looking for a flexible, integrated solution that could be adapted to the various types of training projects to be rolled out: a self-training portal, coaching, 100% distance learning, blended learning, etc."

As such, it was the distance learning program offered by CrossKnowledge (first quarter of 2008) that won over the company's decision-makers thanks to its many assets. *"This program is particularly formative for us since all training officers as well as the managers of the ING Belgium training project must be able to use distance training in their programs in an efficient, relevant manner, whether it be blended learning, 100% distance learning, upstream*

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“For ING, this is really a global corporate project. In the long run, all our employees will be affected by the revolution in training methods which is long-distance learning.”

Hendrik Geleyte, Manager Development Advise,
Learning & Development, ING Belgium

and/or downstream from other training initiatives”, Nathalie Vandervinne, the Project Manager who coordinated the implementation of the CrossKnowledge solution, points out. Some advantages of on-line learning are its flexibility and user-friendliness. Anyone who has access to a computer is able to study during their work hours, while on break or even at home. “Thanks to this solution, we can train many employees in very little time”, explains Cécile Leonard, Human Resources Manager. The advent of distance learning does, of course, not mean doing away with face-to-face teaching methods. As Cécile Leonard asserts, “It should be a harmonious blend of both kinds of teaching methods, what we call ‘blended learning’. When it comes to teaching certain notions of interpersonal skills, there is nothing better than having a human being present.”

The “Summer School” serves as a test

In practical terms, the first on-line training program was launched in 2008 in the form of a wide-scale test during the “Summer School” session, with the aim of initiating this new teaching method. And what about its first users? Target groups of some one hundred employees who studied what

is known as behavioural modules such as interpersonal skills, assertiveness and communication. “We set up an incentive system with prizes for those who learned the most while other marketing operations were developed relating to this launch campaign”, explains Nathalie Vandervinne. A wide-ranging marketing and communications plan was conducted in order to inform ING Belgium employees about these new programs (creation of a specific logo, an Intranet site, posters, post cards, among others). There was even a dedicated stand, with a computer connected to the training portal, temporarily installed in an area throughout everyone naturally passes.

Heads of the Learning and Development department are fully aware that the transition to on-line learning represents a real cultural revolution for a good number of employees. “Each generation differs in its familiarity with computer tools. Training and versatility are necessary. It’s up to us to convince our colleagues of the value of this approach if we want them to become fully involved and enthusiastic supporters of the project within the company. We are aware of how important it is to communicate to everyone and to prepare them for the change”, explains Nathalie Vandervinne.

Results equal to the stakes and the expectations

The results of this first campaign speak for themselves: more than 330 trainees volunteered. 96% of these actually connected to the training portal and 84% followed on-line sessions. During the three-month “Summer School”, more than 1,500 CrossKnowledge sessions were consulted and followed, representing 1,100 hours of training.

To complement these quantitative results, a satisfaction survey was conducted among trainees at the end of the campaign. It demonstrates clearly how well the ING Belgium employees adopt this new teaching approach. Close collaboration among the ING and CrossKnowledge teams, a wide-scale communications plan, follow-up and regular support for trainees using a learning and teaching plan are only a few of the key factors behind the success of this initial project, and as many “best practices” for the future.

As Hendrik Geleyte asserts, “It is really a company-wide project for ING. In the long run, all of our employees will be affected by this revolution in training methods known as distance training.” ●●●