



# Scaling up your e-learning activities with Employee-generated Learning



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# Introduction

The digital world has made it mandatory for organizations to scale up their learning processes. However, organizations are challenged to meet the content creation for e-learning courses, lack of manpower in learning and development (L&D), stringent creation cycles, small budgets, and the fast-paced business. In this scenario, L&D is often left in limbo to meet the requirements of growing business goals.

A model that helps L&D in fulfilling the above scenario is Employee-generated Learning. Your employees are subject-matter experts and the best resources for business knowledge you can find. How about they create the learning content for e-learning courses instead of spending time, money, and external resources on this.



Employee-generated Learning is an L&D methodology that shifts the responsibility of creating learning content from instructional designers to employees. Hence, you will reduce learning costs, maintain courses in just a few clicks, and create content in no time.

In this e-book, we delve into the nuts and bolts of this learning intervention. We also share a couple of commonly heard business challenges along with the Employee-generated Learning solution, drawn from our client conversations.

**But before we move on, we would like you to self-assess if you are troubled with the following in your organization:**

Question	Yes/No
Challenged by lengthy processes of content creation	
Constrained by budgets for course creation	
Flabbergasted by huge number of regional content creation requests	
Disappointed by the slow movement in L&D course creation	

If your answer is a yes to one or more of these questions, you might want to consider the solutions we offer. Read the following business challenges and the solutions.

## Chapter 1

# Business challenges – Easygenerator's solutions

In this chapter, we present to you some of the critical business challenges organizations face, and the solutions we offer.

### Business challenge 1

#### Slow and lengthy content creation process

The traditional e-learning content creation process is tedious and slow because of L&D's lack of business knowledge. L&D inevitably relies on subject-matter experts working in each field to obtain foundational knowledge for the e-learning content. Traditionally, this involves a lot of time spent in communication between L&D and subject-matter experts, resulting in a time lag, and missed market opportunities. The immediate options that are available to your organization are off the shelf or bespoke content. They may not be cost-effective, misaligned to exact business requirements, and are time-consuming along with an increased opportunity cost.

### Solution

#### How Employee-generated Learning solves the problem:

L&D's lack of knowledge to create essential learning content is no longer a hurdle since employees are empowered to create their own training content. We believe that organizations can solve this problem by facilitating the people who have the knowledge (subject-matter experts) to capture it themselves. To be successful with this approach, the process must not only be easy but must also support subject-matter experts in doing it effectively (didactic support). As a step in this direction, the L&D team can serve as a strategic consultant, activating a network of Subject-matter experts and supporting them to share knowledge and create effective content.

Read how we helped Nielsen with [Employee-generated Learning](#).

### Business challenge 2

#### Constricted budgets

Creating and maintaining e-learning modules using a centralized L&D approach, or third-party providers is not cost-effective. Given the increasingly stringent budgets, L&D cannot afford to create all the new content centrally or outsource content creation to a vendor.

### Solution

#### How Employee-generated Learning solves the problem:

Unlike working with a vendor, where L&D or the subject-matter experts communicate back and forth repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of the content, Employee-generated Learning enables everything in-house. This removed the need to call vendors for any content updates and necessary changes, resulting in additional costs for L&D. With Employee-generated Learning in place, employees can now step in and update the content on their own.

**Business challenge 3****Speed-up your business**

Today's business environment is highly competitive, and employees strive relentlessly to meet ever-changing market needs. To keep pace with these rapid changes, the teams must upskill at an unprecedented pace. As a result, the L&D team constantly receives new training requests.

**Solution****How Employee-generated Learning solves the problem:**

Employee-generated Learning enables employees to share their proven tacit knowledge in a continuous cycle. This has accumulated into an up-to-date knowledge pool. Such pools of information now help other employees to keep up with rapidly changing business demands.

**Business challenge 4****Overwhelming regional requests**

To keep pace with ever-changing market needs, companies must upskill their employees with unprecedented speed. As a result, L&D teams have to requests new training content. The centralized L&D teams do not have time to handle smaller, more specialized requests from various regional teams within the organization. The resources available to L&D departments are usually insufficient for handling the sheer volume and diversity of training requests they receive.

**Solution****Employee-generated Learning solves the problem:**

L&D teams can leverage Employee-generated Learning by offering the opportunity to individual departments to create their own learning solutions, and play an active role in sharing knowledge. This results in several regional requests being fulfilled within the teams. Instead of struggling to meet demands or claiming that it was beyond their scope, the central L&D team can offer a well-supported solution to stakeholders with smaller requests while maintaining its focus on global, and strategic initiatives.

**Business challenge 5****Doing more with less**

One of our clients explored various methods to do more with lesser people. This is the current situation of not only our clients but worldwide. Employees are often trying to cram ten hours of work into an eight-hour day. To improve this situation, subject-matter experts need a way to share the workload with their colleagues efficiently with a minimal error rate. At the same time, they need their peers to be equally knowledgeable, so they could share the workload without constantly leaning on L&D to train others.

**Solution****Employee-generated Learning solves the problem:**

L&D can now accomplish more with a minimal investment of time. After an initial period of creating content to train peers to be equally proficient, L&D can assume a supportive, background role. This has enabled them to manage their workloads more efficiently and focus on strategic training projects.

Confronted with these challenges, L&D teams have opted for a home-grown, employee-driven solution to harness internal expertise.

## Chapter 2

# What is Employee-generated Learning?

## Background of Employee-generated Learning

Essentially, Employee-generated Learning is about giving subject-matter experts the responsibility for creating content. It harnesses their expertise and enables them to share it with colleagues.

One of our clients decided to leverage Employee-generated Learning by offering individual departments the opportunity to create their own learning solutions and play an active role in sharing knowledge. In one of the cases, L&D provided teams with an easy-to-use authoring tool and created an internal site with general guidelines for creating effective training material. Today, over 500 employees in that company are creating learning content through an effective system of peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing.

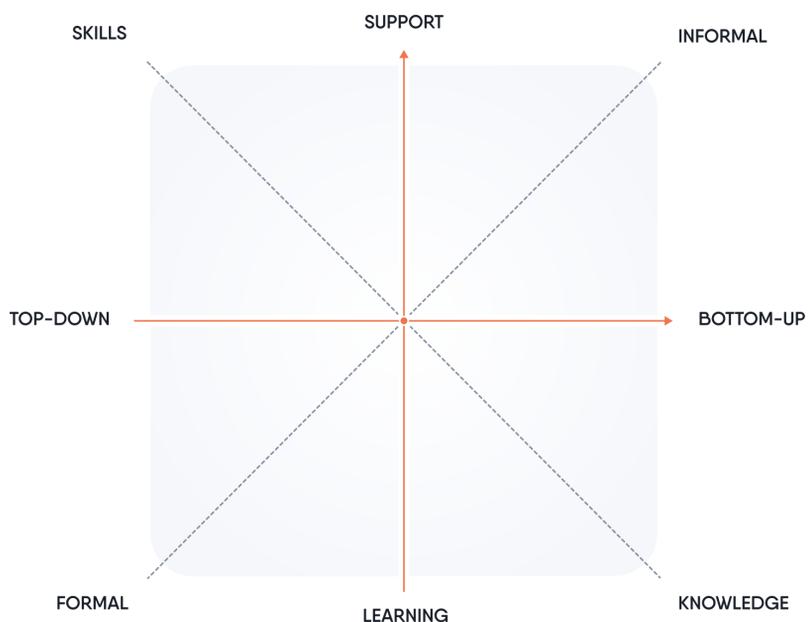
The table below shows how subject-matter experts used the Employee-generated Learning model for a few popular courses/topics

Team	Action
Product leadership teams	Developed learning content about new models and services
Client service teams	Created new programs on optimizing working relationships with clients
Call centers	Created programs on how to answer calls and resolve issues effectively
Field representatives	Created training courses on how to interact with clients
Call centers	Created content on process tips and tricks for using analytics tools

## Employee-generated Learning and e-learning trends

We believe there are four main trends driving the learning industry:

1. From formal learning towards informal learning
2. From a top-down approach towards a bottom-up approach
3. From a learning approach towards performance support
4. From a knowledge focus towards a skill focus



Based on the current trends in L&D, we can see that although there's less demand for content creation required for macro and detailed learning, the need for micro, short and actionable content is increasing.

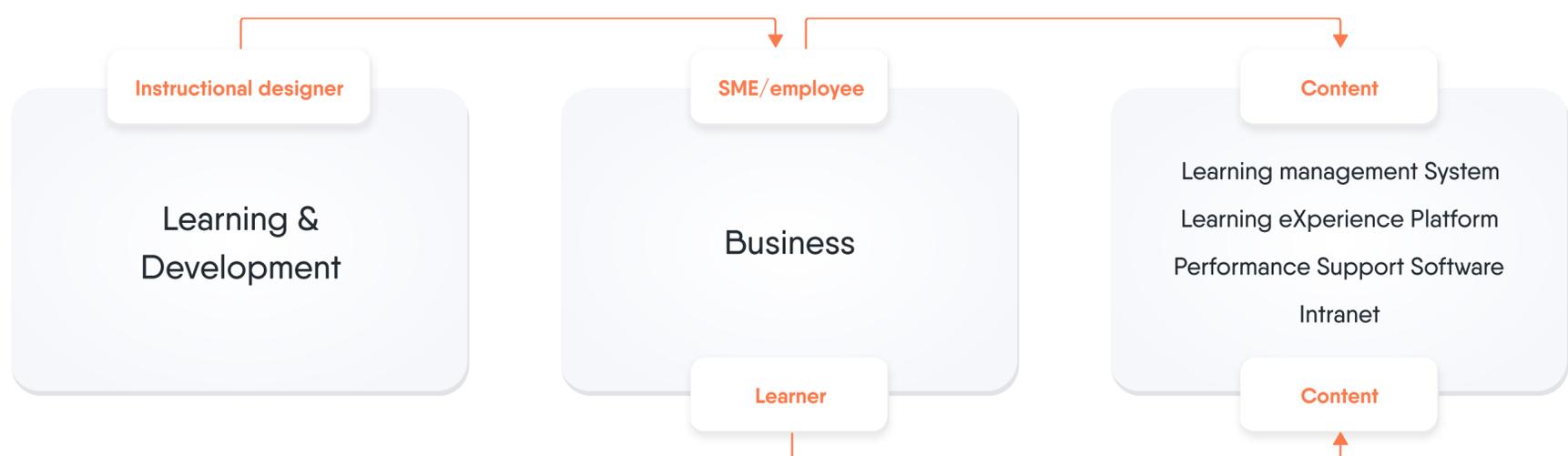
This is in line with the shift to knowledge sharing and performance support, where the majority of learning content should be informal. L&D teams should move their approach from courses to workplace resources instead. Most formal e-learning courses are created by instructional designers. Although these are specialists in e-learning, they may not be experts on the particular topic they are creating content for. Designers then shuttle back and forth with experts (often employees) to ensure all content is accurate.

There are serious downsides to this approach:

- Instructional designers (especially third-party vendors) are expensive. It can cost anything between \$9,000-\$30,000 to create just one hour of learning content.
- It's time-consuming and resource-heavy. It usually takes between 90 to 240 hours to create just one hour of e-learning.
- Content is often out-of-date by the time it is published.
- Exorbitant cost involved to keep updating periodically.

Employee-generated Learning offers a useful alternative. It turns the content creation process on its head by allowing employees to share their expertise. This allows them to take responsibility for creating their own training. By putting workers with the most relevant expertise in charge of building and maintaining e-learning, you can slash all those earlier downsides.

Employee-generated Learning is hugely empowering due to the recognition your employees get for their expertise. It also acknowledges that employees understand your core business better than L&D.



## Chapter 3

# The impact of Employee-generated Learning on employer and employees

To be successful with the Employee-generated Learning approach, the process must be easy to use, while supporting subject-matter experts in creating effective content. L&D must serve as a strategic consultant, activating a network of subject-matter experts and supporting them to create effective content.

The table below shows how subject-matter experts used the Employee-generated Learning model for a few popular courses/topics

Stakeholder	Concern	Approach
Business leaders	Costs and culture - We can make better use of employees' time instead of getting them to crowdsource content. Will the culture accept this bottom-up approach?	People tend to accept change when it makes sense and they can see the positive benefits for themselves. L&D must demonstrate those benefits to business leaders and subject-matter experts. For example, according to the research by Robyn Defelice, and Karl Kapp, it takes between 42 and 143 hours to create an online course. Similarly, a <a href="#">Chapman Alliance</a> study found that it costs one hour of e-learning material between \$10,054 and \$50,371 to produce. L&D can save time and money by encouraging Subject-matter experts to contribute and share knowledge instead of following the traditional end-to-end cycle of content creation.
L&D	Impact - How can you expect to teach subject-matter experts to be instructional designers when they lack formal education in this area?	Subject-matter experts don't have time for training in pedagogy. They have their own jobs to do. But Employee-generated Learning provides a streamlined approach to capturing their expertise. The authoring software they use must be simple to use, so subject-matter experts begin creating content right away.
Employees	Time - I don't have a lot of time; how long does it take to create an e-learning module?	It is vital for L&D to make clear to subject-matter experts that full-length online courses are not always the answer to learning needs. A simple piece of informal information or a brief resource might work just as well. Employee-generated Learning dovetails with the SME's normal working behavior of self-solving on-the-job challenges, without expecting Subject-matter experts to become pedagogical experts. This approach assures the busy subject-matter experts of the little time it takes to share their knowledge.

## 5 benefits of Employee-generated Learning

### 1. Create courses quickly

In a typical setup, an instructional designer interviews employees to access their expertise. They use employees' knowledge to design a course and return it to them to review it. This process is repeated before the content is ready to publish and may cost up to hundreds of hours just to create one hour of e-learning. With the Employee-generated Learning, however, subject-matter experts create learning content. There are no interviews and back-and-forths anymore, making the process that much faster.

### 2. Fits your budget

Employee-generated Learning turns subject-matter experts into owners of learning content creation. They use their own expertise as a source of input for e-learning. To create a course with Employee-generated Learning, you will need lesser subject-matter experts and iterations before a course is published. With the ability to create courses quickly and at a lower cost, you're able to scale your learning too.

### 3. Keep courses up to date

The longer the process to create a course is, the higher the chances that content is outdated by the time it reaches learners. Updating courses can be difficult and expensive. Employee-generated Learning content is maintained and updated as it is created: by handing responsibility to the subject-matter experts. They know exactly when a course needs updating. With an easy to use e-learning authoring tool, your subject-matter experts can update a course in just a few clicks. And you will no longer be surprised by hidden additional costs.

### 4. Create an inspiring learning culture

Employee-generated Learning lets employees learn from each other, empowers them, and helps them inspire each other to keep on developing and growing. This type of employee-to-employee learning through Employee-generated Learning promotes a positive learning culture within your team or company. Apart from that, it will turn employees into owners of their growth. Having a strong and inspiring learning culture leads to better business outcomes and will strengthen your organization.

### 5. Expand your L&D's capacity

Is your L&D department creating a fraction of the needed learning content because it is understaffed? Create more capacity with Employee-generated Learning. With subject-matter experts' hands on deck, you can expand your capacity significantly. You'll be able to meet way more e-learning needs, fast.

## Chapter 4

# Steps to launch Employee-generated Learning



### 1. Start small, identify the sweet spots

Every organization has a huge volume of untapped tactical knowledge that exists on the work floor but isn't necessarily recorded in writing. The idea is to capture and share this collective know-how of best practices.

- Start with sweet spots where employee needs intersect with business needs and technological capabilities.
- We are not advocating to replace classroom training, rather we recommend finding those sweet spots where employees can step up and handle L&D demands for themselves.



### 2. Provide guidance: develop user-friendly toolkits that make it simple for users to create training

As a learning expert, you are in a unique position to share the best practices and strategies for creating content. Provide guidance to employees, teaching subject-matter experts to fish on their own.

Develop a central hub where users can find and share knowledge on how to create training. Make it as appealing and as easy to use as possible. It could be a wiki, an Intranet page, a WordPress site, or even part of your Learning Management System (if you have one).

Within that hub, develop and curate key resources, including industry best practices, how to get started, how to create training content, examples, brand guidelines, templates, how/where to share finalized content, and how to reach the learning team with questions and feedback. You might even develop a wizard or a set of questions that helps users figure out what they need and whether training is really the answer for their business issue.



### 3. Provide tools: a platform that enables users to easily create and share training content

Give users access to an intuitive platform for developing and deploying content. Don't expect them to go find one on their own. E-learning software for non-e-learning experts has to be easy and intuitive to use, with templates to create content and strong technical support from the tool provider.

The L&D team can play a strategic role in helping source a solution like Easygenerator and then continue to provide guidance and enablement to users, teaching subject-matter experts.



#### 4. Partner with HR, regional teams, and senior leaders

Employee-generated Learning is a democratic learning model that embraces the power of community and hence, L&D needs to garner adoption and buy-in from the business leaders.

- Work with your HR and business leaders to adopt and promote the working and value-add of this approach.
- A gentle push from a favorite business leader can create a wave of inspiration among your employees to participate in knowledge creation.



#### 5. Empower subject-matter experts to co-create learning resources

Besides the business stakeholders, you also need to involve employees who are your actual knowledge creators. Foster a “co-development” model that recognizes employees as experts and encourages dialogue between employees and the L&D department.

- Inform employees so the learning curve is not as steep when they start using the tools for themselves.
- Encourage employees to think beyond functional subjects like engineering/manufacturing and give them enough examples to think beyond courses. For example, learning in crucial areas like compliance can also be achieved by sharing simple anecdotes or experiences that demonstrate the practical side of compliance rules.
- Appreciation plays a big role in continuing the knowledge sharing behaviors. Harness it and inspire more Subject-matter experts to join the knowledge revolution.

Employee-generated training may not be appropriate in all situations. The type of industry and its internal culture will dictate many of these. For example, safety and compliance training is typically seen as high stakes and may not be handed off to users. Follow the guiding principles in your organization – but don’t be afraid to challenge them either. Employee-generated Learning can be very effective. Start small and make a mark!

## Chapter 5

# Case studies: we empower with Employee-generated Learning



### Nielsen - Empowering employees to create content

#### Challenge — Solution — Outcome

Nielsen's L&D team had been flooded with learning requests. The team needed to reduce its workload to be able to focus on strategic learning programs while handling several small regional requests.

By adopting the Employee-generated Learning methodology, Nielsen employees were able to start handling learning requests themselves without sacrificing content quality. Nielsen employees quickly embraced easy tools to create courses, onboarding sessions, product training, and work instructions for which they had previously relied solely on L&D.

Today, over 500 employees in the company are creating learning content through an effective system of peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing. Instead of struggling to meet demands the central L&D team now offers a well-supported solution to stakeholders with smaller requests while maintaining its own focus on global, strategic initiatives.



### Increasing e-learning output

#### Challenge — Solution — Outcome

The workforce at Sodexo consists of people from over 130 different nationalities. Regional training requests can be highly specific. Plus, local culture and language differences need to be considered. Often, the sheer volume of requests left the team at a loss, and translation of materials was an expensive, time-consuming process. Given the large number of training requests and the limited capacity of the global L&D team at Sodexo, they were unable to fulfill essential tasks like course maintenance and preparing just-in-time training materials.

Since nobody understands regional training needs as well as local employees themselves, Sodexo has adopted the method of Employee-generated Learning. Employees author and share their training content. Its employees can now create just-in-time learning materials. These courses are immediately ready to use, without lengthy translation and localization processes. And they don't have to wait for an instructional designer to create a course with more complex tools.

Their biggest successes so far have been in the Soft Service Framework team in France and the roll-out of a tool for Marketing. The Soft Service Framework team needed to create and share training videos with test questions. Using Employee-generated Learning and our authoring tool, the team built 23 modules themselves. They did this 22 times faster than using instructional designers and 42 times cheaper.



### Building a knowledge-sharing culture

#### Challenge — Solution — Outcome

Danone is a multinational with 105,783 employees in 55 countries. The Head of digital Learning has encountered some typical L&D challenges like a small group of L&D experts, external vendors which resulted in not-so-scalable or delayed solutions. Danone was unable to develop and maintain learning content at the right speed and with the desired flexibility.

Danone has introduced Employee-generated Learning and it means that every employee, partner, and supplier can leverage their peers' knowledge, wherever they are, whenever they want.

Today, 2 years after implementing Employee-generated Learning, Danone has over 500 authors in more than 30 countries. One of the biggest goals and results Danone has achieved is building a knowledge-sharing culture. Now, local teams can produce and maintain content entirely independently.



# Conclusion

The Employee-generated Learning approach is already working for many companies that are experimenting with social and collaborative learning. It is a practical way to actualize the knowledge sharing paradigm that happens in workplaces and is quite aligned with the user-generated behaviors of a modern workforce. If you are a large enterprise, read our [e-book on why large enterprises are moving to Employee-generated Learning!](#)

Given the overall trend to go bottom-up, informal, performance-driven, and skill-based learning – L&D must transcend the conventional e-learning process which can limit the knowledge currency. Instead, L&D must democratize content creation by partnering with the actual knowledge creators who are employees to create a live knowledge base that operates at the speed of business.

E-learning is a great medium to support the rapid upskilling of the workforce, but the control must be decentralized, and informal knowledge sharing must be incorporated as the mainstream to unleash the explicit business knowledge and easily scale the existing e-learning activities.

