



# More with less: how can telecom operators handle their training needs despite tighter budgets?



# Table of contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Introduction &amp; Methodology</b>	<b>02</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>L&amp;D challenges for the five largest telecom operators</b>	<b>03</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>How Employee-generated Learning (EGL) benefits the telecom industry</b>	<b>08</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
<b>Rolling out Employee-generated Learning</b>	<b>10</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>11</b>

## Chapter 1

# Introduction & Methodology

Telecommunications is one of the most competitive industries in the world, where change is the only constant. Driven by fast-paced technological innovation, L&D teams must rapidly train vast numbers of employees on a never-ending stream of new products and services. Besides the strain of non-stop, high-volume training requests, L&D must also continually streamline its processes and cut costs.

Our research looks into the question of how L&D teams at telecom companies can serve the learning needs of their organizations despite budget constraints. We relied on extensive analysis along with first-hand interviews with our client, T-Mobile Netherlands.

This eBook provides insight into real L&D pain points and needs of telecom operators today. It also enables us to conclusively propose Employee-generated Learning (EGL) as the most viable, sustainable solution going forward.

## Chapter 2

# L&D challenges for the five largest telecom operators

The following is a round-up of the main L&D challenges facing five major telecom operators today: Vodafone, Telefonica, AT&T, T-Mobile, and BT. For each company, our research identified the major obstacles in L&D and helped us formulate viable, cost-effective solutions.



### Challenge

#### **Traditional training is distracting**

Employees are forced to devote precious business hours to classroom training, which distracts them from their core business of serving customers.

#### **Knowledge is too localized**

Each worldwide store accumulates its own expertise with limited ability to share knowledge with other stores.

#### **Need for hands-on experience**

Preparing in-store staff for customer interactions depends on their real-life experience. This is difficult to teach in a classroom or through PowerPoint.

#### **Infrastructure constraints**

Stores have limited computer access and staff relies almost entirely on smartphones to access knowledge.

#### **The fast pace of business**

There's hardly any downtime in the stores for teams to study or reflect on their training material.

### Solution

#### **Peer-to-peer sharing**

To spread vital knowledge across various store locations and regions, provide experienced staff members with an easy-to-use, online platform for exchanging information with their colleagues.

#### **Mobile-first microlearning**

To overcome the challenges of limited time and infrastructure, use smartphones as the main e-learning platform. Design e-learning content to be accessible in short, easily digestible portions – also known as microlearning content.

#### **Tailored, instantly accessible content**

Instead of waiting to attend formal training sessions to gain the necessary information, create a knowledge base that staff members can instantly access on demand.

## Challenge

### **Conventional L&D methods are too slow**

Because of the endless roll-out of new products and services, it's difficult to keep training content up to date and relevant.

### **Traditional training is too time-consuming**

Training takes up copious time, distracting employees from their core responsibility to serve customers.

### **Fast-paced business**

Training requires continuous innovation in order to keep up with ever-evolving job descriptions, technology trends, and business goals.

### **High costs**

It's extremely cost-intensive to train large numbers of employees across multiple regions.

### **Sustainability**

It's not clear whether current training efforts set employees up for long-term success in their roles.

## Solution

### **On-demand learning**

The ideal solution shouldn't require taking employees off the work floor. It should also provide them with an agile learning solution. For these reasons, create an online knowledge base they can easily access on demand.

### **Mobile-friendly solution**

Learning content should be optimized mobile devices to enable on-the-job access to knowledge.

### **Highly specialized learning**

Learning content should be created and curated by subject matter experts – an approach known as Employee-generated Learning (EGL). Considering the highly specialized subjects of IT support and mobile app development, EGL enables content creation by those with in-depth experience.



 **Challenge****Sustainability**

It is essential for established brands to maintain their legacy business while reaching out to younger, digitally native consumers. This requires continual innovation and an agile, adaptable workforce.

**Modernizing the product**

As an iconic brand, AT&T is faced with updating its product offering from cables and hardware to wireless and cloud-based.

**Modernizing the workforce**

With its diverse, multi-generational workforce, the company needs effective ways to modernize its skillset. Many employees are accustomed to traditional training methods. They may also require new technical skills, such as cloud-based computing, coding, and data science.

 **Solution****Blended learning**

Modern L&D does not have to be all-digital. In some contexts, a smart blend of online self-learning tools and face-to-face classroom training is the ideal mix.

**Qualification is key**

Show recognition and promote development by issuing digital badges. This gives employees a stronger urge to improve their skills and remain up to speed with the changes affecting the business.

## Challenge

### **More with less**

Despite L&D budget constraints, the volume for learning content has never been greater. They need a solution that allows them to achieve more outcomes with fewer resources.

### **Overwhelming onboarding needs**

Particularly in crucial customer service positions, onboarding and training is a never-ending necessity. New employees need product knowledge along with classic soft skills for managing customer relations.

### **In-store training**

The company relies on a well-trained workforce across its many stores to serve customer needs. This leads to many potential L&D hazards. Knowledge gets isolated in each store, staff have little down-time for learning, and the company cannot provide full-scale classroom training per store each time for each new product or service released.

## Solution

### **Employee-generated Learning**

Enable each business unit to meet its own needs for learning content. Give employees an easy-to-use online platform where they can create and share knowledge. This would be a low-cost and highly scalable learning solution.

### **Integration**

Integrate L&D resources with learning platforms like Kahoot to create an appealing, interactive, and social learning experience.



## Challenge

### **Wide-scale field operations**

The company needs to provide and monitor learning for 30,000 field engineers. Field operators work semi-autonomously and have no regular access to a classroom environment. This means providing access to information while workers are on the move in remote locations.

### **Fast-paced changes**

Employees must be continually brought up to speed with new techniques and best practices as they quickly emerge.

## Solution

### **Mobile learning**

Enable field operators and other employees to access and share knowledge on their smartphones using a mobile-friendly learning platform.

### **Scalability**

Leverage the knowledge already inherent within the organization. Provide employees with a platform to seamlessly exchange knowledge and skills. This creates a strong virtual network and support system, even for employees far apart.

### **Tracking tools**

Guarantee the effectiveness of your learning strategy by implementing smart tracking tools. Monitor learner performance and award certificates within a virtual learning environment.



## Chapter 3

# How Employee-generated Learning (EGL) benefits the telecom industry

## T-Mobile's case

**Problem:** Meeting the heavy demand for learning content despite tight budgets.

**Solution:** Employee-generated Learning

From a telecom-industry-wide perspective, the main challenge facing L&D departments today is fulfilling heavy requests for training content despite shrinking budgets.

T-Mobile's case was no different. Their training requests were accelerating because new products were being launched rapidly, the amount of regulation was increasing, and consumers expected better customer service. Yet, they were facing budget cuts that had reduced their L&D team from 14 trainers to just four. Many training requests were going unfulfilled or taking too long to reach learners.

Training specialist Dennis Mooldijk realized that the L&D department alone would never be able to meet the demand. They needed to find a way to scale their training output with only 25% of their previous resources.

After identifying user-generated content as the most suitable solution, they teamed up with Easygenerator to launch a new knowledge-sharing model. This involved having experienced employees create their own training content and share them with their entire business units.

This shifted the responsibility of fulfilling training requests shifted from the L&D department to the various business units. At the same time, L&D became responsible for quality assurance and guidance, shifting away from content creation.

By tapping into the knowledge inherently available among its workforce, T-Mobile Netherlands increased its training output by 500% using only 25% of the resources it had previously devoted to L&D.

# What is Employee-generated Learning?

Employee-generated Learning (EGL) is a social learning model that empowers individual members of an organization to capture their knowledge and share it with their colleagues. It taps into the real source of knowledge within any company: the employees themselves.

Experienced employees have a wealth of real-life, on-the-job experience. That makes them subject matter experts (SMEs) in their specific fields. Centralized L&D departments at telecom operators already rely on SMEs for input when creating training content, calling on them to review and correct educational material.

In an EGL model, L&D no longer creates all the content but equips SMEs with the proper digital tools to do it themselves. This is an effective model for training employees on practically any technical topic, especially in large telecom operators.

## Benefits of EGL for telecom operators

There are many ways L&D teams at telecom operators stand to benefit from an EGL model. Here are the main advantages:

- **Speed**

EGL is faster than the conventional, centrally facilitated learning strategy. By putting the content creation process in the hands of the business, it eliminates the time-consuming back-and-forth between L&D and SMEs. As new products and services are released, SMEs across the corporation and various telecom stores can simply author their own training content and share it with their immediate business units.

- **Cost-effective**

EGL requires less reliance on a centralized L&D staff and expensive third-party suppliers, making it a much more cost-effective way to meet training requests.

- **Agility**

SMEs are directly involved in the business, and as a result, far more responsive to its needs. They have the applied knowledge needed to keep their colleagues informed and competitive on the job.

- **Scalability**

EGL is rapidly scalable because it draws from a much larger pool of content creators – employees. They can share their knowledge anytime without having to go through a centralized department first.

- **Quality of knowledge**

Content produced through EGL is also higher in quality because it taps into knowledge that's already been learned and applied by everyday employees. Instead of providing knowledge from an overarching, theoretical perspective, EGL focuses on what people really need to know in order to do their jobs. L&D still serves a crucial quality-assurance role in steering the content creation process.

## Chapter 4

# Rolling out Employee-generated Learning

## EGL: the future of L&D in the telecom industry

To successfully implement EGL, L&D teams in the telecom industry must gain the support of key stakeholders within their company: business leaders, employees, and their fellow L&D team members.

Get started with these steps:

- **Identify opportunities for training**

Determine what the high demand learning topics in your organization are in where EGL can be most effective. For example, product training, sales training, or technical support.

- **Create a pilot program**

Try EGL out in your organization as part of a pilot program. For this, you'll need an easy-to-use authoring tool that any employee can easily operate and create content with regardless of their professional background.

- **Track the results**

Monitor how your pilot program performs using the following KPIs: the volume of content created, and learner outcomes.

# Conclusion

Given its speed, cost-effectiveness, and scalability, EGL makes a sustainable learning mode. It's highly compatible with our fast-paced, mobile culture and it's already thriving across telecom operators today.

The results speak for themselves: T-Mobile Netherlands has successfully boosted its training output by 500% while slashing L&D spending by 75%. Our experience and research prove that EGL is extremely effective for telecom operators like T-Mobile, and that it's the future of L&D.

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## About the author



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