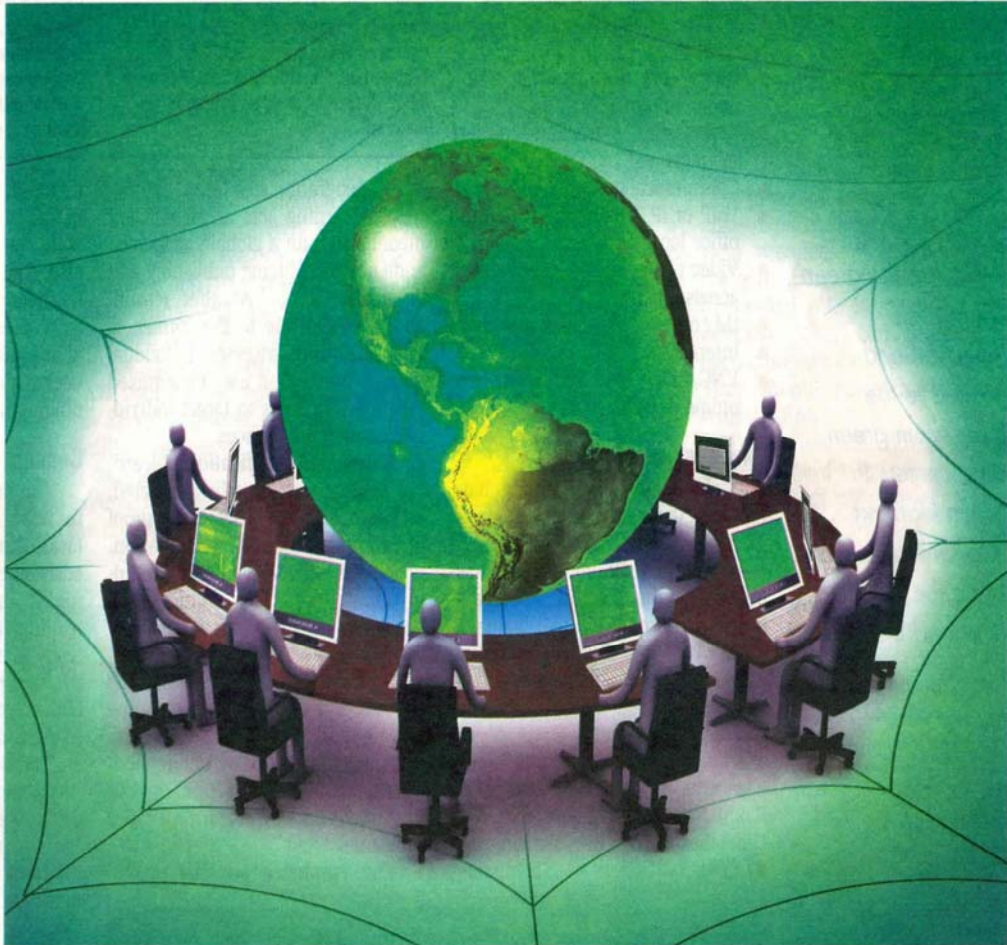


# E-learning, green learning

**Renuka Vembu** looks at how companies are going the green way in their training initiatives



**'G**reen' is 'in'. As companies are struggling to keep tight pockets amidst the financial tide, there is also an increasing pressure on them to save the ecology from the clutches of depleting resources. For companies, it is as much a cost-cutting measure as a corporate social responsibility and a compliance issue.

Organizations have various interactive mediums through which employees today can have access to information and knowledge—wikis, intranet, blogs, etc. The learning and sharing also happen real-time through video conferencing and VoIPs. Every company in the IT sector today has initiated and embarked on e-learning modules—the need pressed by tighter budgets, dispersed

workforce spread across geographical locales and thereby the need for a greater reach, and the imperative requirement to bridge the social, geographical and cultural disparity.

The government regulations and IT compliance are driving organizations to look for loose strings under the radar that have to be pulled up. But amongst these various compulsions, creating a big wave are the green campaigns launched and pushed to the fore—from green data centers to green learning. 'Go Green' seems to be the mantra now and the way ahead.

Sriram Raghavachar, Head, Satyam Learning Technologies, explained, "The increasing diversity of organizational processes and systems has warranted many a change

in the manner in which learning is delivered. Our curriculum centered offerings have made way to role-based course offerings that have direct business impact. From, traditionally in vogue classroom based programs, learning at our company has migrated to a virtual and distributed model where content is delivered through a variety of channels such as e-learning, virtual repositories, Web radio/TV, podcasting and virtual collaboration platforms." More than 55% of the delivery happens virtually, for leadership-centric programs, the ratio is as high as 80%, and self-help features have reduced learning related queries by 80%.

## Companies and communication

All companies have their own ▶

ways and means of communicating with employees. The traditional ritual of posters or pin-ups on notice boards have been replaced by blogs and the intranet—technology ruling the roost. Bhavin Turakhia, Founder and CEO, Directi, said, “We at Directi have always embraced and implemented creative technological solutions for common communication problems large companies face today.” Some of the tools and technology they use are:

- Document/resource sharing—collaboration
- SVN—code sharing
- Wikis—knowledge/information sharing
- Blogs and forums—discussion and community building
- Task/issue trackers—project management
- Communication
- VoIP or IP Telephony—for within office locally
- Video conferencing—for meetings across offices
- IM conferences—quick meetings
- Interaction
- VNC/RDP—live and interactive online demos

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#### Why e-learning?

Technology and e-learning have replaced the conventional mode of training, knowledge sharing and communicating. Training being indispensable to the growth of any organization, e-learning is a tool that facilitates the process of upgrading employee skills and makes them agile in today’s competitive and volatile environment. Some of the main reasons why corporates adopt e-learning initiatives as stated by Rakhi Sharma, Vice President, HR, UnitedLex include the following:

- **Cost reduction:** As companies



**Shailesh H Mehta**

FOUNDER AND CEO, GURUKULONLINE.COM

The idea is to have sustainable use of resources which can be recharged by Mother Earth on a sustainable, long-term basis. Resources could be energy or material

grow geographically and people-wise, e-learning acts as an efficient medium to train a globally dispersed audience by reducing publishing and distribution costs. Another reason, and a related one to the former, is that e-learning assesses individual training needs, and uses customized learning style tests to target individual learning preferences.

- **Automated certification:** E-learning modules are digitally generated, and automatically generate the proof of completion and certification, which are essential elements of training initiatives. This reduces the burden of the HR function in any organization.

- **Group collaboration:** E-learning also plays a strong role in creating new opportunities for groups to work together. Aided by online moderators, these net seminars can be powerful for learning and problem-solving.

- **The employee advantage:** On-



**Sriram Raghavachar**

HEAD, SATYAM LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

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demand availability of e-learning modules enables students to complete training at their convenience; also, self-pacing for slow or quick learners reduces stress on the employees. Besides, through its interactive nature, e-learning engages users, pushing them rather than pulling them through training.

#### Concept of green learning

The importance of e-learning like reduced paperwork and manual tasks, saving on the transportation costs, streamlining of processes making it more efficient, automation leading to easy accessibility and ready availability, enabling real-time decision-making, a single interface, a collaborative learning mechanism, ease in modification and updation, etc., are well-known.

Shailesh H Mehta, Founder and CEO, Gurukulonline.com, opined, “As we understand, green learning is the term used wherein we use minimum resources to carry out our day-to-day activities. The idea is to have sustainable use of resources which can be recharged by Mother Earth on a sustainable, long-term basis. Resources could be energy or material. Besides, it should generate least of pollution, and waste if generated should be amenable to recycle.” Based on this criterion, e-learning can definitely be described as green learning because it saves tremendous resources, mainly petroleum and energy used in transportation of people from their place of dwelling/office to place of learning a college/school/training centre. What e-learning enables is learning delivered on your desktop or even your mobile thus avoiding a whole lot of logistics exercise associated with classroom learning.

Dr Prabal Mall, Head, Content Practice, Expertus, said, “Green e-learning has a very promising



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VICE PRESIDENT, HR, UNITEDLEX

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► and bright future. E-learning solutions can contribute directly to the reduction in usage of hydrocarbon." Here is how we can endorse green learning:

- It directly reduces the use of paper, thus saving precious trees.
- It is reusable and hence reduces the use of fossil fuels.
- E-learning solutions can be used to launch worldwide learning programs, thus reducing individual and corporate footprint.
- Green e-learning programs on environmental impact and preventive measures are in use.
- E-learning due to its worldwide reach, could be used to spread green knowledge.

Keeping this in mind and adhering to the green practice is GlobalLogic, where orientation and trainings programs, and registration and feedback are all catered to online. Some of the reasons they have embarked into this space, a mixed bag enhancing employee capabilities with optimum utilization of resources, as provided by Iti Kumar, AVP People Development and Employee Services, GlobalLogic, are:

- To facilitate employees to learn at their own pace.
- To enforce the self learning drive in the company.

All online course material is

launched in wiki formatted medium and people who use these materials can give their instant feedback using wiki mode in which they operate.

It supports their GL Foundation Charter of being an eco-friendly organization. Green environment is one of the charters and they have taken some initiatives other than e-learning which comprise:

- Introduction of double-side printing
- Publishing the list of employees who use the printer to the maximum
- Initiated 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) process. The objective of this initiative is to reuse the used/waste print paper
- Printing quota system based on the nature of job

#### Advantages to be garnered

E-learning initiatives can be a success if the company has the resources, infrastructure and technology to support it, and employees have the inclination and understanding to use it accordingly. Turakhia asserted:

- Providing access to a range of resources and materials which may not otherwise be available or accessible in a paper environment due to resource maintenance policies.

■ Providing an employee-centric learning environment which can be tailored to meet the learning needs of individual students.

■ It creates an environment that promotes an active approach to learning.

It provides opportunities for frequent and timely individual feedback.

- It motivates employees through appropriate use of interactive courseware.
  - It supports and encourages collaborative learning.
  - It supports economic reuse of high quality, expensive resources.
- Chetan Shah, MD, Synygy India, said, "The best way that employee can pitch in and support e-learning is by giving an honest and timely feedback to make it more effective. Like in-person trainings, e-learning also requires active participation from attendees." It's important for the participants to share their experience and help in making it more effective. They can register and even complete certifications online. They should be geared to move with the flow.

People are the most important force that need to be convinced into any venture or initiative. ■

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