

## Extension Material 11.4

### The case for e-learning

The following arguments have been put forward in support of e-learning.

- It frees people from the spatial and physical restrictions associated with classroom-based learning. This means that people can, theoretically, learn at times and in locations suitable to them and their lifestyles.
- It creates the ability to offer flexibility in the way in which people learn. A person can learn at his/her own pace and can choose a learning package that is suitable for his/her own learning style.
- E-learning has the potential to reduce significantly the cost of training. Despite the high initial investment in e-learning packages, these can support the learning of large numbers of people both on-site and off-site.
- E-learning helps to create the 'independent learner', who is able to take control of his/her own learning.
- It facilitates the tracking of progress and achievements.
- It is critical for connecting people and databases, and for facilitating collaborative working and learning.

But what is the reality of adopting an e-learning strategy? Are the claims made in its support justified by the experiences of both trainers and employees who are using e-learning methods? Evidence from the CIPD (2007) suggests a growing trend towards the use of e-learning. It found that:

- 48 per cent of respondents reported that they used e-learning;
- over two-thirds (67 per cent) expected its use to increase.

These findings confirmed the results of an online poll conducted by the CIPD in 2004, which concluded that, despite issues over implementation, e-learning had become an accepted part of training provision (CIPD, 2005).

The evidence from individual organizations that have invested heavily in an e-learning strategy suggests that e-learning is not a solution in itself, but can make an important contribution to workplace learning and training (see [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk) for case studies in this field).

The message seems to be that developing and implementing an e-learning strategy takes time, commitment, and considerable resources. Those companies that see this as an evolving and improving process, based on a realistic understanding of its limitations, are those that are likely to reap the promised benefits. On the other hand, those that have unrealistic expectations, apply it to types of learning for which it is unsuited, and fail to provide effective learner support and feedback mechanisms, are likely to express disappointment with the experience.



#### REFERENCES

CIPD (2005) *E-Learning Survey Results Report*, at:  
<http://www.cipd.co.uk>

CIPD (2007) 'E-learning: Progress and prospects', at:  
<http://www.cipd.co.uk>