

DynaMind eLearning – eWorkshop model

In 2005 DynaMind eLearning - inspired by the training delivery challenges faced by a global shipping company - designed an e-learning model that focuses on facilitated collaborative learning, which was (and still is) quite different to the common approaches out there. The eWorkshop model was born.

The eWorkshop model has become increasingly popular in the international development world, culminating in [winning Gold in the 2014 Asia Pacific LearnX Awards for best e-learning model](#) for a [programme developed for World Vision Australia](#).

We design and develop eWorkshops. If you want to design and develop your own, you are most welcome to join the next [Moodle eWorkshop design course](#).

eWorkshops require a specific approach to e-facilitation. We run [e-facilitation workshops](#) 4-5 times every year. You need to complete the e-facilitation workshop first before you do the [Moodle eWorkshop design course](#).

The following is an overview of most frequently asked questions about the eWorkshop model.

What is an eWorkshop?

E-workshops are collaborative and facilitated online training events that are run over 5 to 8 weeks and typically require 4-6 hours learning time per week. They are asynchronous to allow for people from different time zones to work together, as well as to avoid the typical challenges of webinars. With real-life scenarios and problems to solve in teams, e-workshops are always very active and enjoyable. Specialized design and a trained e-facilitator are key success factors.

The learning theory behind the eWorkshop model is problem-based collaborative learning and the tailored e-facilitation methods are essential to making this work. Solving real-life problems together with other people in your field supports that deep learning and application of skills that's so often lacking in traditional training, be it in class or online. It's great for networking too.

When do eWorkshops work best?

This design works best when:

- the subject includes considerable grey areas – with only few right/wrong answers ([the knowledge cannot be packaged](#))
- learners' work contexts define extensively how the skills and knowledge will be applied
- your learners love learning together with others and/or there is a strong (business) case for promoting collaborative/social learning
- the application of the skills and knowledge is done in teams in the workplace
- your learners appreciate networking opportunities while they learn

How do eWorkshops work?

We design our eWorkshops in Moodle because we find that its linear design reflects the learning journey of the participants. It is most user-friendly because all activities and resources are only one click away from the main page. This is particularly important for people who are not very tech savvy, but seems to be generally appreciated for its simplicity.

The workshop page include labels (to give context), activities and resources – all fully integrated in a clear time schedule. We design eWorkshop in such a way that participants are expected to spend 4-5 hours per week on completing the activities and accessing the supporting resources. This varies from one workshop to another depending on the objectives.

People log in when it suits them best but they need to complete the work by the end of the given week. So it's self-paced to a certain extent, but not 100%. This is because there is plenty team work in an e-workshop and otherwise this wouldn't work.

Any team task typically takes 1 or 2 weeks. These are complex real-life problems reflecting work done and decisions made in participants' work places. The time limitation and learners' commitment to contribute bite sized input regularly allows for solutions to 'build' very quickly. Although no-one is required to be online at a one particular time, it often feels like real time. Not everything is done in teams. We strive to balance team activities with individual work.

Why so much focus on collaboration?

Collaboration, not cooperation: the difference is subtle, but important.

Cooperating means working with someone in the sense of enabling, typically by providing information they wouldn't otherwise have. When online learners are asked to share their experiences or answer questions posted in a forum, that's cooperation. Most online courses are cooperative, even though they are often labelled to be collaborative.

Collaborating is much more active. 'Labore' from which the word collaboration derives, means work. It means actually working alongside someone to achieve an agreed outcome. This may involve changing our own individual approaches. Differing views may require negotiation to ensure all team members 'own' the team's outcome.

Collaborative learning requires higher thinking skills than cooperation. Collaborative learning is connected to the social constructivist view that knowledge is a social construct. We believe true collaborative learning achieves much deeper learning. Learners talk about being 'hooked' and 'addicted' to logging in every day to check on progress made by their team.

This is what we are aiming at when designing team tasks to be truly collaborative – getting learners deeply engaged and inspired.

What is the difference between eWorkshops and asynchronous online learning typically offered at universities?

eWorkshops are designed to support professional development rather than the focus on developing knowledge typical of university courses. You will hardly find any academic papers in eWorkshops. The activities are very closely related to what people do in the workplace. Resources are added ‘just-in-time’ when people/teams would need them to solve the problem in the activity.

University courses are usually content-focused. Learners read the content first, after which they are invited to [share their thoughts in a discussion forum](#) (often supported by probing questions by a lecturer) and possibly asked to do some quizzes and submit an assignment. eWorkshops on the other hand are built around a backbone of problem-based team activities. Participants don’t discuss for the sake of it, they discuss to solve problems. This considerably enhances motivation and hence participation rates.

What is the difference between eWorkshops and standard self-paced e-learning modules?

This table captures – in a nutshell – the difference between our e-workshops and self-paced e-learning modules.

<i>Self-paced individual e-learning modules</i>	<i>Facilitated participatory eWorkshops</i>
Stand-alone modules accessible on any website	Developed and delivered on Moodle LMS
Access and completion any time	Asynchronous collaborative work allows for self-paced learning within a set number of weeks (several deadlines for collaborative tasks)
No facilitation	Extensive and professional facilitation
Individual learning/ no collaboration	Extensive collaboration
Task-based/scenario-based learning	Problem-based learning
Focus on concept mastery and application in mini-scenarios	Focus on integrating learners’ own experiences into the learning process (over and above concept mastery)
Immediate and automatic feedback	Feedback within one business day; feedback specific to learners’ contexts and experiences; ‘woven’ feedback to connect co-learners contributions
Quiz-based/scenario-based assessment	Problem-based/ story-based assessment integrating learners’ own context (may include some quiz-based assessment as well)
Mainly instructivist	Mainly constructivist
“Canned” content and activities	Flexible content (through conversations and additional input by the facilitator based on group’s needs)
SCORM compliant for monitoring and tracking	Moodle tools for monitoring and tracking

Why are the tailored e-facilitation skills so important?

The role of the e-facilitator is crucial. They are not 'tutors' nor 'instructors'. It is vital that e-facilitators know how to communicate in this role, when to play an active role and when to stand back, as well as how to support true collaborative online learning according to a constructivist learning philosophy. Giving feedback is another key skill which new e-facilitators learn in the e-facilitation workshop.

The required abilities are different from traditional online tutoring skills. This is why all e-facilitators running our clients' eWorkshops are trained by DynaMind, regardless of the online tutoring experience they might have had in the past. The learning objectives for the e-facilitation workshop can be found [here](#).

What is so different about the eWorkshop design?

[Designing tough and engaging online team tasks](#) is the most challenging part of developing eWorkshops.

This requires extensive interviewing of subject matter experts and practitioners. What does success look like? What do people new in the job find hard? Where do they make mistakes? Why? What happens when they do? What tools do they use? How do solutions differ from one situation to another? What defines this? These are some of the many questions we ask to our clients when developing these tasks.

Then we get down to storytelling. Every team task includes a story and a complex problem. It is designed in such a way that at all times team members feel they can add value to the solution-building.

Resources are only looked into when the activities have been designed. What can we provide the learners to help them when solving the problem? Other stories? Tool templates? A little bit of theory? A plain English 'how-to'?

And finally we construct the 'learning journey', with all the necessary learner support in the right place. No-one should spend any time looking for information or their workplaces. Technology needs to be intuitive – even for newbies - so the focus can be on the e-learning.

How do eWorkshops apply adult learning principles more than other e-learning models?

This question is answered comprehensively in this [blog post](#).