

DRTC Proposal Notes/Transcript

1. Introduction

This is the technology plan and vision for EDCI 59100 for the spring semester of 2013. I am proposing to Darden Restaurants.

2. Company Information

Darden Restaurants was founded in 1938 by Bill Darden (Darden Restaurants, 2013). The company owns and operates more than 2000 restaurants, employing near 185,000 individuals; serving at 400 million meals a year (Darden Restaurants, 2013).

3. Problem Statement

Due to the hospitality industry experiencing a negative economic impact, many entities have been forced to reduce their budgets and re-allocate their funds. Top business expenses include: 1) Rent, 2) Labor, 3) Cost of goods sold, 4) Equipment, and 5) Advertising (Suttle, 2013).

4. NGTI

Darden Restaurants plans to implement a "Next Generation Training Initiative" in an effort to restructure their training system and reduce labor costs. I wish to propose a technology enhanced training program for Darden.

5. Vision Statement:

Darden needs to become a leader in educational technology, but cannot become a leader unless support is given from the administration and training division. The support provided will implement distance learning into Darden's training program.

6. Distance Learning

The NGTI should offer a "hybrid distance-education" environment for training classes and learning. A hybrid course consists of face to face and online learning within one course. Darden training classes will still include face-to-face (F2F) training, but at a reduced amount.

Distance education is not a new concept as it was introduced 160 years ago and it has expanded ever since (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2012). According to Ural (2007), distance learning systems are being used with traditional education systems due to the higher demand for education. Many universities are now using distance education due to the transformation of current technology as well as the increase in demand for independent learning (2007).

Darden needs to follow the distance learning (e-learning) strategy with their NGTI to allow their employees to learn collectively at the restaurant and individually at home (remotely) in order to maximize information retention and fulfill "Hospitaliano!"

7. Meeting the needs of digital learners

Darden is encouraged to use technology in their training to adapt to the needs of the digital learners in society. The company is recommended to digitize their training materials and host them electronically on a Learning Management System.

8. Reducing costs

The company is encouraged to integrate technology into their training materials and classes to assist in reducing training labor costs. The previous training system included only face-to-face training and printed materials. The Next Generation Training Initiative (NGTI) will focus on the use of technology to produce, deliver, and the give the ability to access training materials online versus using the company's current strategy with printed materials.

9. DiSH

PeopleSoft offers a Learning Management System (LMS) in their application software package.

This LMS will allow Darden to:

- Improve employee performance
- Assist employees in career development
- Lower costs in reference to training labor
- Utilize a blended learning approach

10. Goals of the NGTI

Support Darden's "Going Green" initiative-Digitizing training materials will allow Darden to produce less printed materials, saving on printing supplies and shipping costs to each individual concept.

Adapt training materials to the needs of the digital learners in society- Darden will emphasize e-learning in their future training materials to allow learners to review all digital materials either at their restaurant or remotely to promote individual learning.

Reduce F2F training hours- The NGTI will allow Darden to reduce F2F training hours as a cost cutting initiative.

11. Supporting Research

Supporting research includes:

- Learning Agility
- Cost of Labor
- Technology in Education and E-Learning

Learning Agility

Clark and Gottfredson (2008) define learning agility as an "organization's ability to respond to adaptive challenge- be it an opportunity, threat, or crisis- through the acquisition of knowledge and skills."

Bersin (2012) notes that the use of technology has changed nearly every industry and a need to become agile in retail, hospitality, manufacturing, healthcare, financial services, professional services, and every other industry is necessary.

Several factors are noted to have an impact on the advancement or prevention of organizational learning agility: 1) Learning Mindset, 2) Leadership Behavior, 3) Learning Technology, 4) Organizational Support (2008). Environmental contexts are also mentioned; however, this aspect influences the learning agility factors in a positive or negative way depending on the strength of learning agility within the organization.

Darden tends to score high in all factors of learning agility except for technology.

"Creating an organization with learning agility—one that learns and responds quickly to constant change—may be the central organizational challenge of our time"(Clark & Gottfredson, 2008, 4).

As long as Darden adapts to the needs of their employees and learners with technology, this organizational challenge will not be difficult.

Cost of Labor

Restaurants have many expenses, with the highest being: 1) Labor costs, 2) Cost of goods sold, 3) Marketing/Advertising, 4) Occupancy Expenses, and 5) Administrative Costs (Redman, 2013).

Labor costs include salaries, wages, benefits, unemployment taxes and service commissions (Redman, 2013). Staffing is usually one of the largest controllable costs (Nyheim & Connolly, 2012).

The NGTI will help reduce training and labor hours since labor is considered a variable/controlled cost (Schmidgall, 2006).

Technology in Education and E-Learning

E-Learning refers to the use of computer network technology (via the Internet) to deliver information and instructions to individuals. E-learning is noted to allow for more student-centered learning than faculty-centered instruction.

The NGTI will focus on meeting individual learning requirements and provide satisfactory learning for the end-user.

Nyheim and Connolly (2012) state that strategic investments in Hospitality need to have a positive return on investment. "New technology can decrease the cost of maintaining systems (228)."

Nyheim and Connolly feel "Information technology can be used as a tool to differentiate and create a competitive advantage (21)." The NGTI will focus on using information technology in their training as a competitive method to attract new employees.

In order to have a competitive advantage in the market, Darden's current labor management system will be upgraded to sync with PeopleSoft and the LMS to provide a maximum return on investment with labor hours as well as individual learning.

12. What about the non-digital learners?

- Not all individuals are classified as "digital learners" in society
- Distance education has been noted with disconnectedness and isolation (Ostlund, 2011).
- Non-digital learners often find the internet and technology confusing and intimidating (Simonson et. al., 2009).
- It is also noted that online learning requires learners to take more responsibility for their own learning, which can be viewed as a challenging task (Simonson et. al., 2009).

13. Digital Learning

- The world is increasingly shaped by digital technologies (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2011).
- Any learner retains digital skills in several shapes and forms (2011).
- E-learning is noted to allow for more student-centered learning than faculty-centered instruction (Wang et. al., 2010)

14. Addressing concerns

To address the needs of non-digital learners:

- Offer support through the Darden Customer Service Center
 - Twenty-four hour support through the Darden Total Rewards Hotline (DRI-EDGE) will be offered for individuals with technology concerns and issues with accessing training materials.
- Print training materials for non-digital learners
 - All instructional materials will be able to be printed for a user who is not comfortable in a digital-learning environment
- Encourage individual learning
 - Darden requires individuals to already be committed to their learning prior to employment.

- Specialized training will be given for individuals to adapt to individual learning

15. Recommendations

- Integrate PeopleSoft LMS in the DiSH portal
- Digitize all training materials to post in the LMS
- Create instructional videos to accompany the digital materials
- Utilize the LMS as a method of instruction and to assess learners
- Adapt technology to meet the needs of digital learners

16. Conclusion

- The integration of technology with the NGTI is essential to the future of Darden training
 - Darden will need to adapt their learning agility and technology to meet the needs of digital learners in society.
- Promote distance and individual learning
 - Darden employee's today can be classified as "digital natives" or "digital immigrants," as noted by Prensky (2001).
 - The NGTI will promote technology and e-learning with a focus on group learning and individual learning.
- Reconstruct training curriculum to meet the needs of digital learners
 - Darden employee's today can be classified as "digital natives" or "digital immigrants," as noted by Prensky (2001).
- Host a LMS to reduce F2F training and labor hours
 - By implementing technology into their training curriculum, Darden will be able to reduce costs of training and labor, which is one of the higher expenses on a restaurant's budget.

17. Thank you for your time and please feel free to share your questions or comments.

NOTICE: This presentation/proposal is for educational purposes only and is not meant to dictate Darden training materials, business investments or plans, or any other proprietary information.