

# Librería Álvarez

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## 1. Facts about the institution

Name of institution	Librería Álvarez
URL of institution	
Country	Seville - Spain
Number of Employees	4
Revenue in 2005	
Experience with e-learning since	2005
Business sector	Bookshop
Target group/participants in e-learning	Proprietor
Content	Computers
Form	Online web-based
People interviewed	Librería Alvarez: Antonio Alvarez Rey

## 2. How the institution used e-learning

### 2.1. The courses

Librería Alvarez is a small retail enterprise selling books. Until last year it had no experience in e-learning. In 2005 they found out that it was possible to carry out e-learning courses subsidised by the *Fundación Tripartita para la Formación en el Empleo* (Foundation for the Vocational Training) ([www.fundaciontripartita.org](http://www.fundaciontripartita.org)) and *Fondo Social Europeo* (European Social Fund), these organisations promote the Spanish policies on Lifelong learning - through an agreement signed between the Spanish Booksellers' Guild and the company Editrain. This offered him the chance of registering for the course, free of charge, and he took advantage of this opportunity.

He chose a Microsoft Word training course, as he was using the program a great deal and wished to improve his understanding of it. Additionally, he then had the time to follow the course.

The main objectives were:

- To understand the functions of the Word program and its most advanced tools
- To get an in-depth knowledge of the options for integrating between the different Microsoft Office programmes
- To make use of all the opportunities offered by Microsoft Word
- To improve performance and productivity from using Microsoft Office in a working environment

The Microsoft Word e-learning course contents included:

- Basic aspects of the programme
- Advanced tools
- Formats.
- Importing graphics and creating drawings

- Working with tables
- Working with long documents
- Sharing data with other users and other applications
- Working with online documents and the Internet
- Merging documents in combination with correspondence
- Personalising Microsoft Word

He believes that it was a satisfactory experience and would be prepared to repeat it.

The entire course was on-line, with no face-to-face sessions.

## 2.2. Number of employees involved

One, the proprietor<sup>[ 3]</sup>

## 2.3. E-learning platform and technology issues

To carry out the course, he used the Internet Explorer browser.

The platform is supplied by Editrain, ([www.editrain.com](http://www.editrain.com)) a company specialising in consulting and training, with more than 10 years' experience in the field. Made up of highly-specialised professionals, it carries on its activities in Spain, Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. It participates in European Commission meetings on "life long learning" and has developed training consultancies in countries such as Russia, Hungary, Latvia, the Ukraine and Brazil. It has participated in numerous European technology and training-related courses. It is a EFQM Quality-certified company.

Face-to-face training provided to more than 2,000 professionals from businesses and institutions has provided it with a know-how which has permitted the development of its own online training platform. The LMS e-learning platform meets the ADL SCORM and AICC e-learning standards.



Figure 1 – Screenshot of the first page of the *Aula Virtual*

## **2.4. Course development**

Editrain supplies an *Editrain Virtual Classroom Initiation Manual* with clear, comprehensible explanations on accessing the course, its structure, basic usage principles and study tips.

Editrain provides software for downloading and a user name and password. This information allows users to enter the Virtual Classroom, which in turn allows access to the Virtual Campus and the course itself.

The courses are made up of a series of lessons and a final assessment test. The goals to be achieved are specified at the start of the course. Each lesson consisted of an explanatory text and exercises to be carried out, which were corrected by the tutor within 48 hours. It was very easy to use and presented no problems.

There was a tutor for queries, with both synchronous communication tools (telephone and chat room) and asynchronous ones (internal messaging service). As well as evaluating the exercises and the development of the course, the tutor also sent encouraging messages to strengthen commitment to the course.

He could also contact other students by means of the chat room, to solve problems, discuss incidents, etc. but never used this communication tool with other participants.

## **2.5. Course administration**

The entire process is carried out via the Internet. After registering, he received an e-mail from Editrain informing him that he was accepted on the course and providing him with his user name and password. With this information, he entered the Virtual Classroom.

## **3. Effects and outcomes of e-learning activities**

### **3.1. Completion rates**

He completed the course

### **3.2. Satisfaction**

It was a satisfactory experience. It fully met his expectations. The experience was better than expected.

## **4. Challenges and barriers**

In general, the policy for informing SMEs about e-learning is poor.

SMEs involved in retail, without any previous experience of this form of learning, show a certain resistance towards e-learning.

Online training of employees during working hours is difficult because their job activities prevent them from having a peaceful environment without interruptions in which to follow the course.

Training outside working hours needs a lot of motivation, necessity and/or interest in the subject, as much more commitment is required for e-learning than for face-to-face training sessions.

These obstacles were satisfactorily overcome. Through an organisation representing the sector, A. Álvarez received direct information on e-learning and the courses available to him. His prior knowledge of computers and the Internet made it easier for him to

assimilate this form of learning which meant he did not have to absent himself from the shop and was free to organise his own study time.

His motivation and interest in the course were strengthened by the relevance of the contents to his work and the ease of using the *Aula Virtual* (Virtual Classroom).

## 5. Success factors

In general, participants on an e-learning course rate the success of the experience in terms of their expectations, the relevance of the contents to their needs, the ease of using the platform, the educational support, the synchronous and asynchronous tutoring system, speed of response, technical assistance where applicable, services, etc. When all these aspects work properly, which was the case here, the experience is very highly rated and there is an increased willingness to continue with this kind of learning.

Another factor in its success is the convenience of the training process: no need to travel and no pre-set times.

For Antonio Alvarez, the motivation of learning new skills in Word, a program which he uses a great deal, as well as its brevity, was also a key factor in this e-learning course.

In addition, we should stress that the option of following a completely subsidised course is very highly rated, and is often an essential factor for owners and employees of SMEs involved in retail for following both virtual and attendance training courses.

## 6. E-learning investments, developmental costs and operational costs

The course was subsidised.