

## Golff Supermarkets

By Tom Verdam, Golff and Diederick Stoel, ProfitWise

### 1. Facts about the institution

Name of institution	Clients: Golff / Prisma Food Retail
URL of institution	Clients divers / <a href="http://www.e-beat.nl">www.e-beat.nl</a>
Country	Netherlands
Number of Employees	1<#<1800
Revenue in 2006	< 50 mln
Experience with e-learning since	First experience
Business sector	Retail, food supermarkets
Target group/participants in e-learning	Primary group: new employers and employees
Content	Course introduction Golff
Form	Online web-based
People interviewed	

Golff supermarkets are run by independent entrepreneurs. They purchase goods and services from Prisma Food Retail, but are also free to purchase from other providers. Most of the entrepreneurs have set up a private company with limited liability [BV]. The companies can be labelled as SME. Personnel management is carried out by the entrepreneurs independently, with Prisma Food Retail acting as mediator or advisor.

In recent years, the companies have been subject to exceptional pressure. The price war combined with the reduced willingness of consumers to spend money on food has led to a negative pressure on yields. The demand for qualitatively good personnel is considerable, whereas the possibilities for wages in accordance with the market are limited. Supermarket entrepreneurs are well aware of the necessity of training personnel, but due to the pressure on productivity, training has made way for 'learning by doing'. In other words, staff are expected to learn on the job. 270,000 people are employed in the branch.

Per person, an annual sum of approximately € 275 is spent on training and courses. Approximately 1800 people are employed at all independent Golff branches. Each year, approximately € 25 per employee is spent on training and courses. The courses are held outside the branches, at fixed times, during opening hours. The training of employees has a negative effect on productivity. Training is perceived as being qualitatively mediocre. Entrepreneurs generally experience them as being fun, social events, where not much is learnt; a day out'. These negatively-coloured experiences have contributed to a situation in which little to nothing is undertaken in the way of training. This has served to increase the extent to which Golff has fallen behind other chain stores (Ahold). The training needs are evident, but the point of departure is 'faster / more effective / cheaper'.

In 2005, the representatives of the entrepreneurs defined an initial training request for e-BEAT. The request was mediated by Prisma Food Retail, which besides Golff, three other chain stores are affiliated with. This is a total of 450 supermarkets. If the acceptance of the e-BEAT method is positive, the system will also be offered to the other shops. The Golff entrepreneurs all have a 'separate' computer at their disposal that employees can use to follow lessons. The shops all have a broadband internet connection. The entrepreneurs are unfamiliar with e-learning programmes, some of them

are also not very familiar with working with a computer. This business case informs you how the programme has been developed and the factors that have determined the success of the programme.

## 2. How the institution used e-learning

### 2.1. The courses

The Golff introductory course consists of 3 lessons supplemented with 4 readers.

- Introduction on working at Golff;
- Golff House rules, absentee rules, study costs and loan agreement;
- Golff marketing.

The course complies with the organisation's requirements. Each lesson takes approximately 30 minutes, including the self-test together with the lesson. The precise duration of the course depends on the participant and the specific business or personal situation.

### 2.2. Number of employees involved

In mid May 2006, three hundred people took part in the introductory course. (15% of the total target group).

### 2.3. E-learning platform and technology issues

The platform on which the training is hosted and followed complies with the following criteria:

(a) Apache server, (b) PHP. SME entrepreneurs must have at their disposal at the minimum (a) an internet connection (modem 56K or faster), (b) a personal e-mail address, (c) Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher, and (e) a screen resolution of a minimum of 800 x 600 pixels or higher.

### 2.4. Course development

On developing the Golff introductory course programme, eight phases can be distinguished:

(a) determining the proposition, (b) determining the desired intervention, (c) establishing concept and form, (d) establishing the content of the programme, (e) technical realisation, (f) guarantee of continuity, realisation and protection of intellectual property, (g) development, and (h) accounting of the result.

*Ad a. Determining the proposition:* Training employees takes time, valuable time that can only be spent once. SME entrepreneurs generally opt to spend their time on their *core-businesses*. As the supplier of an e-learning application, a powerful proposition can be developed by helping entrepreneurs solve their dilemmas: spending time on what seems to him to be derivative processes or spending time on their *core-business*. The proposition of Golff's introductory course programme is to help SME entrepreneurs have new employees become operational in the shortest possible period of time.

*Ad b. Determining the desired intervention:* How can SME entrepreneurs best be helped? What is the most **effective and efficient**? The intervention must aim to realise the development of knowledge of supermarket businesses, specific knowledge of Golff, knowledge of the house rules and insight into skills in the shortest possible period of

time. The intervention must be especially motivated by the desire to learn at a time that suits you and at a place you can choose yourself.

*Ad c. Establishing concept and form:* What is the most *efficient* manner of shaping the intervention? One way of determining this is to examine which requirements the solution must meet and the preconditions upon which the solution must be realised.

With regard to the requirements, two things are evident.

(a) there must be demonstrable knowledge and insight into the supermarket and the work.

(b) the house rules are demonstrably known.

It is also important that (c) the result of the learning is tested.

What are the preconditions? From the point of view of the entrepreneur, the management time for the course must be minimal. Loss of productivity and the additional costs must be as low as possible. The employees must be able to choose when to follow the course themselves.

The solution would therefore seem to be independent learning. An electronic variant in which data can be collected, sent and checked ensures that the design requirement (c) can be met.

On the grounds of the above-mentioned arguments, a choice has been made for a *web-based e-learning* programme.

*Ad d. Laying down the content of the programme:* In this phase, an analysis was made of precisely what an employee should know. The knowledge must be tested and after the successful completion of the test, the introductory course should also be successfully concluded. The knowledge required was collected by Prisma Food Retail. The collected content is didactically processed according to the lesson package. The programme was eventually compiled from the previous 3 lessons set out.

*Ad e. Technical realisation:* A choice was made partially to have the *e-learning* application built and partially to buy it. There are two parties involved with the building. An external partner provided the technology.

*Ad f. Guarantee of continuity, realisation and protection of intellectual property:* The laying down of a number of formal matters was an important phase in the development of the programme. 450 entrepreneurs and the personnel (9000 persons) *may* make use of the programme. Three questions require a clear and univocal answer.

The continuity of the programme /availability, the management and the learning follow-up system? This has been brought about and completed by functional detailed designs and plans of approach.

*Ad g. Development:* The building of the application took 5 months. This was the period from approving the offer up to the time when the application is placed on the servers, setting up the database and providing personified access. The Users Application Test was set up with a test group. During this test, the user-friendliness was tested. The product application test assessed the taxing of the application on the servers and possible conflicts with other applications.

*Ad h. Accounting of the result:* The Golf introductory course programme examines whether the e-learning module realises the expected results at four levels. In this business case, we have categorised the levels of evaluation on the basis of the evaluation framework of Kirkpatrick (1985): (a) level 1, reaction, (b) level 2, learning, (c) level 3, behaviour, and (d) level 4, results. Using a question list, we reviewed whether the

programme provided SME entrepreneurs with what they had been promised. The so-called reaction level (level 1) was hereby measured.

In the application, validated knowledge tests and an exam are held. The knowledge test consists of multiple choice questions and gives feedback per question. Employees learn while performing the knowledge test. The exam is a discriminating test, with multiples choice questions to be completed within a specific timeframe. This tests whether the material given has actually been absorbed by the course participant. (learning)

The entrepreneur discusses the result with the employees and coaches them in practice. (level 3, behaviour).

Everyone benefits from this form of training. Entrepreneurs are left with more time, employees have more of a positive attitude, there is a reduced training period at work. A clear financial interest also plays a role. The training costs are significantly lower than for live training. The programme can be used flexibly, there is no travel time required, no external location, and half an hour can be spared from own working hours etc. Both the saving for entrepreneurs and the positive attitude of the personnel are indicators that express the effect of the e-learning programme. We consider this testing as a level 4 evaluation.

## 2.5. Course administration

The programme keeps a note who is participating. Important factors are furthermore (a) has the participant started the lesson, (b) how often has he/she opened a lesson. (c) which scores has he/she realised in the tests and (d) how often did the participant do the self-test before passing. The screens below (figure 1 and 2) illustrate how this takes place. We will further designate the data referred to as management information.

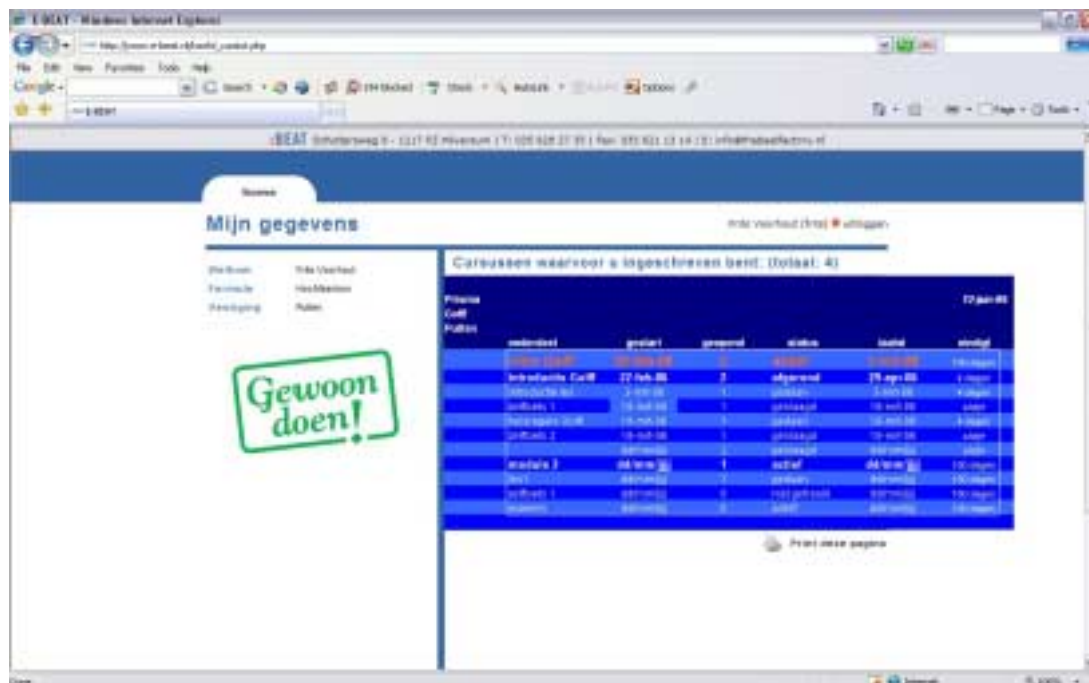


Figure 1 – Registration progress course participant

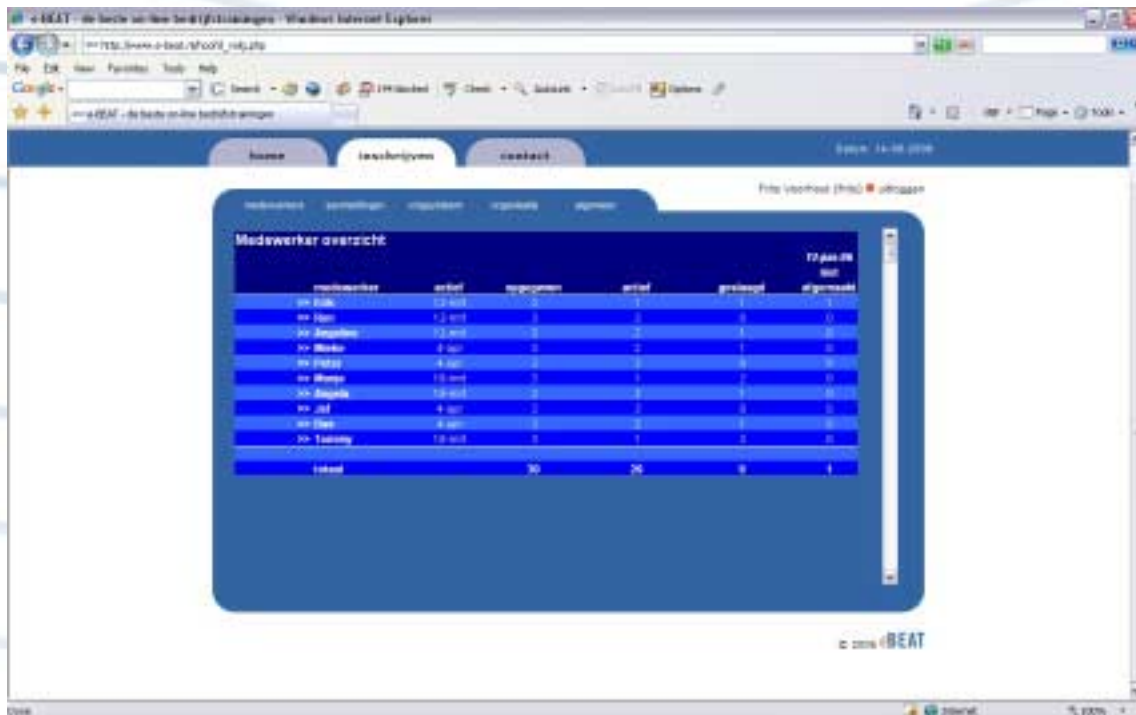


Figure 2 – Rapport of the evaluations

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

Via de management information, the progress of the trainees can be clearly seen.

### 4. Challenges and barriers

Listed in points below are a number of *challenges* and *barriers* that came to light during the development and implementation of the programme.

#### 4.1. Technical issues

- Availability of internet with the right *browser* with the SME entrepreneur
- availability of a 'lesson – computer' with the SME entrepreneur

#### 4.2. Organisational issues

- commitment of second management layer at Prisma Food Retail
- acceptance problems with employees from 35 to approximately 45 years
- acquiring full support

#### 4.3. Other issues

- supermarket owners 'misused' the information
- unschooled personnel were stimulated by certification
- enthusiasm of suppliers, willingness to participate

## 5. Success factors

The introduction of the programme has appeared to be a reasonable success. The manager of the organisation fully supports the initiative and urges supermarket entrepreneurs to take part. The organisation acknowledges the importance of high quality personnel. Good personnel are acquired by investing in training. E-learning by means of e-BEAT is a fast, effective and efficient training method. In this way, Prisma Food Retail is able to create a distinctive character.

This insight and a thorough knowledge of the possibilities and impossibilities of electronic learning environments shed light on the support for the programme.

The spread of the SME entrepreneurs in the country and the logistic challenges almost self-evidently lead to the use of the internet. The pain points 'time' and 'costs' and SMEs need to invest in training at any given moment have made the decision simpler.

A very important factor which explains the success is the financial profit obtained by following the programme. Standard training would entail a productivity loss of one-and-a-half days.

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

This paragraph contains information on cost and (expected) benefit elements.

Investment per branch: € 1,500.-

The total investment includes:

- Advice in the offer phase;
- Development of the application within the framework of a training course;
- Management of the application.

### **Saving in productivity**

Entrepreneurs save 9 hours per employee. On the basis of staff absenteeism of 50 % among the part-timers and an average of 10 part-timers per branch, this is 45 hours savings. The employee is trained to work faster, generating a profit of 7 hours, approximately 35 hours per branch. The savings are 45 hours per entrepreneur, approximately € 4,500.-

### **Increase in productivity**

Productivity in terms of turnover per worked hour is € 140.-. The 7 extra productive hours generate  $35 \times 140 = € 4,900.-$  extra turnover.

**Savings for entrepreneur: € 1,500.- (target group 4000 entrepreneurs) - total savings - €6,000,000.-**

A standard two-day training session takes approximately 18 hours for an hourly fee of € 100. This is € 1800. By completing the training in two to three hours, total time costs for the entrepreneur are approximately 200 to 300 hours. On balance, this generates entrepreneurs savings of approximately € 1500.