

## Medilabor - SAF

By Vanda Vieira, CECOA

### 1. Facts about the institution

Name of institution	Medilabor – Medicina do Trabalho, Higiene e Segurança e Formação, Lda.
URL of institution	<a href="http://www.medilabor.pt">www.medilabor.pt</a>
Country	Portugal
Number of Employees	19
Revenue in 2005	1 080 757,37 €
Experiences with e-learning since	Since 2006
Business sector	<p>Medilabor is one of the pioneering companies in the area of Safety and Health at Work services, for small, medium and large enterprises.</p> <p>Its activity has remained the same since its foundation in 1972, demonstrating well the quality of its services recognized by costumers and official entities.</p> <p>The activity developed currently by the Medilabor consists on the installment of a set of complementary services to the valorization and engagement of the human resources of the company customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Safety and Health at Work: Organization of medical services, Health at Work, Safety at Work and Environment;</li><li>- Vocational training services.</li></ul>
Target group/participants in e-learning	1 Training Technician
Content	e-Learning awareness
Form	b-Learning (traditional training lessons; online synchronous and asynchronous sessions)
Interviewed people	José Manuel Martins Monteiro, Medilabor General Director Maria João Marques, Medilabor Training Coordinator Gabriela Paleta, responsible for the b-learning course from the VET provider SAF – Sistemas Avançados de Formação, S.A. (Novabase Group)

### 2. How the institution used e-learning

#### 2.1. The courses

Course name:	e-Learning awareness
Duration:	39h (9h traditional training + 30h online training)
Target groups:	Managers/training coordinators Training promoters Training technicians Employees and decision makers from VET providers
Objectives:	To learn in e-Learning systems (integration of the online training with the knowledge management) To identify advantages and limitation of e-Learning courses To calculate the ROI of e-Learning
Programme:	Module I –e-Learning awareness Module II – ROI of an e-Learning system Module III – Design of e-Learning pedagogical contents

## 2.2. Number of employees involved

Each training group has around 20 employees (min. 15 and max. 25). From Medilabor, 1 employee was enrolled in the course.

## 2.3. E-learning platform and technology issues

Learning Management System – Blackboard v.7.



Fig. 1 – Screenshot of the AprenderaNet Portal (course access).

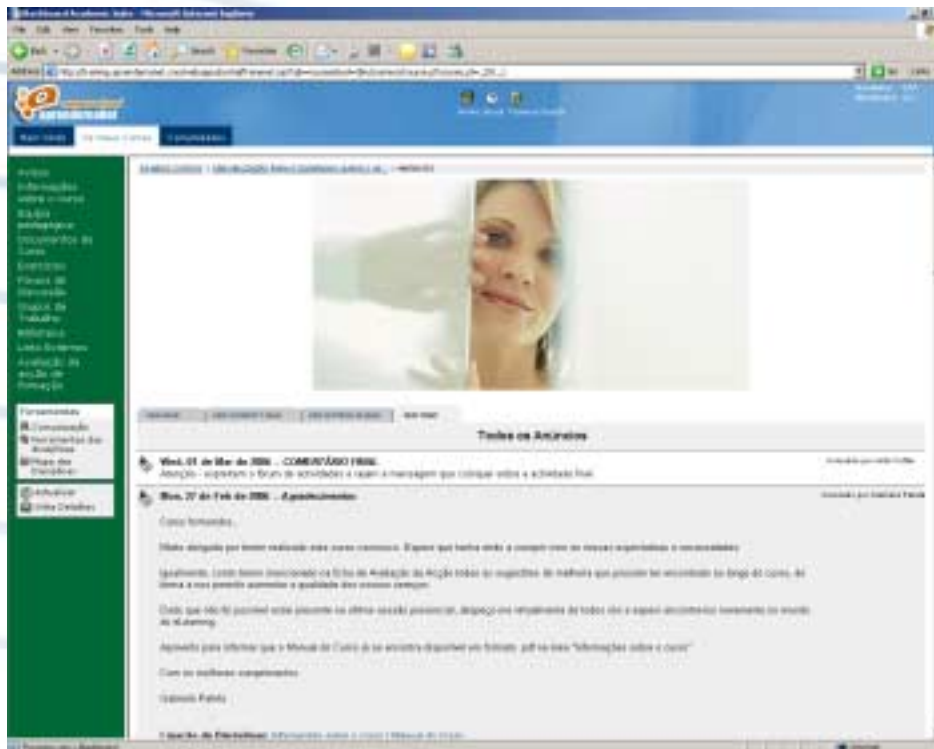


Fig. 2 – Screenshot - first page of the course.

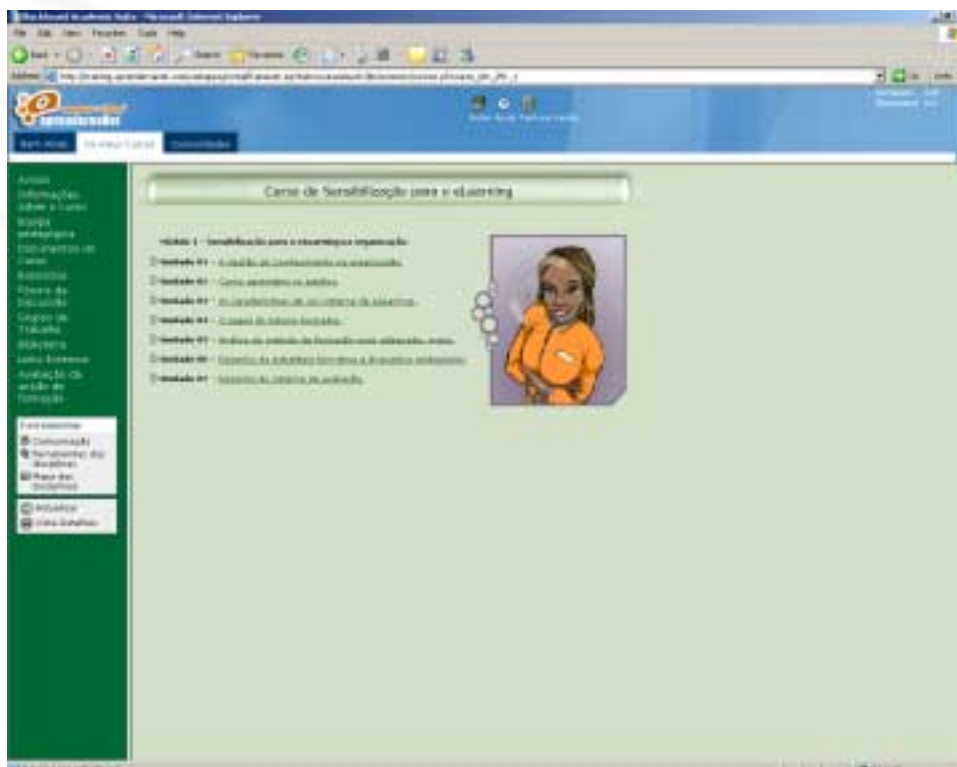




Fig. 5 – Screenshot - course content (Forum).

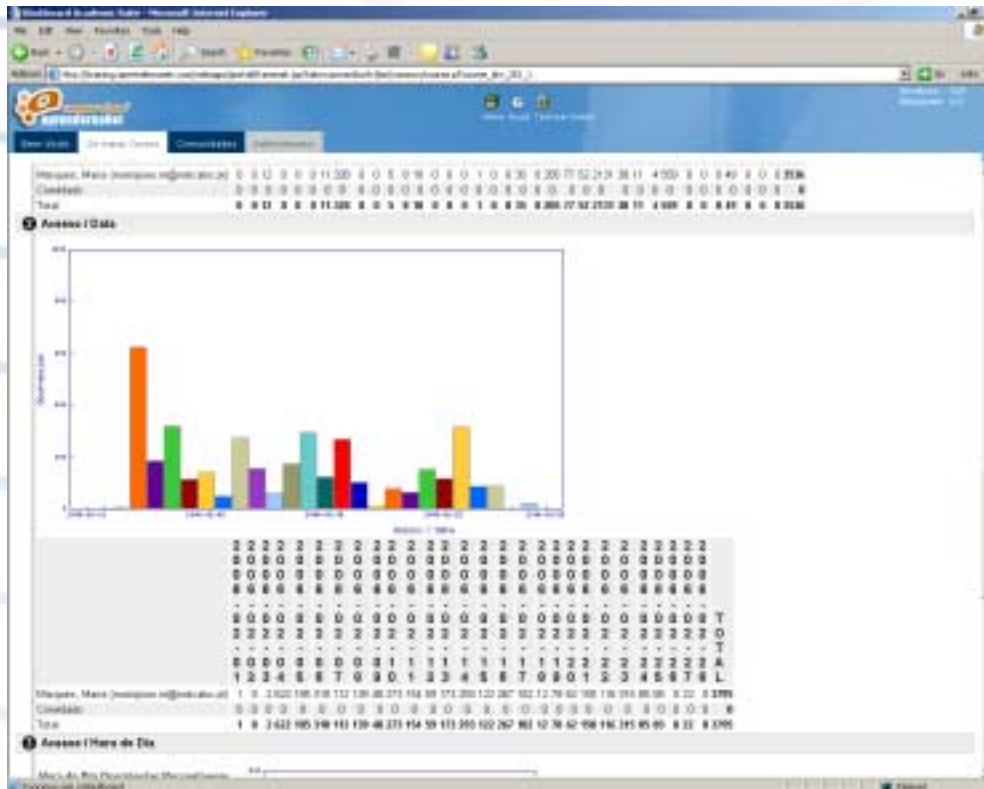


Fig. 6 – Screenshot - course statistics (available to the tutor).

## 2.4. Course development

The “e-Learning awareness” course is a b-learning course. The course has a total duration of 17 days. The traditional training sessions lasts 3 hours each, from 19h to 22h (3 sessions of 3 hours each). Trainees are advised to dedicate, in average, 2 hours per day to the online sessions; however they are responsible for their own time management.

The course progression depends of the tasks performed during the modules. The course activities must be carried out in groups of 4 elements decided on the first training session (or proposed by the e-tutor, in case of trainees’ absence during the first training session). The activities may also be commented in the forum according to tutor’s instructions.

At the end of each module, 2 assessment tests must be completed. Each test can only be carried out one time; however trainees have the possibility to revise the tests whenever they want.

After completing the assessment tests, trainees receive an automatic feedback with each test results. At the end of the course, trainees have access to the course overall assessment results.

## 2.5. Course administration

The administration process is powered by the Learning Management System – Blackboard v.7.

Trainees have a user name and password to access to the training course. When entering the platform trainees has access to the following areas:

- Training course contents;
- Information about the platform functionalities as well as minimum technological and technical requirements to access to the e-course;
- News, articles about e-Learning and Highlights.

In the training course contents area, trainees have access to: information about the course; course supporting documents; set of exercises per module; thematic forums; groups work area; library; e-course coordination and e-tutors notices; training assessment; external links.

Trainees can access to course materials all along the course and after the course ending.

At the end of the course, a course handbook is available for the trainees, in .PDF format, containing all course contents. Equally, trainees receive the course diploma, stating the course name, the course structure, the number of hours completed and the assessment results achieved (in accordance with the national standards defined by the national VET authority - IEFP – Employment and Vocational Training Institute).

### 3. Effects and outcome of the e-learning activities

#### 3.1. Completion rates

The course in which one person from Medilabor participated achieved the following results:

Enrolments: 21

Dropouts: 3

Graduations: 18

#### 3.2. Satisfaction

Maria João Marques did her 1<sup>st</sup> training of trainers' certification in CECOIA. Some year's later she did her 2<sup>nd</sup> training of trainers' certification in order to up-date skills and competences as a trainer. In Portugal this is a compulsory requirement concerning trainers professional certification, for trainers working in vocational education and training, in particular, for trainers working in training initiatives funded by the European Social Fund.

It was precisely during her last course certification that Maria João Marques learned about the importance of self-learning systems as a traditional training complementary methodology.

At that time, Maria became aware of the importance of the self-learning courses material conception and development and since then, she started to collect information from the web about distance learning and e-learning.

In a particular occasion, when she was at home for a considerable period of time, she decided to invest her time in an e-Learning awareness course promoted by SAF. The course was co-financed by the ESF, so there was a small risk in terms of money and time investment and the return was very high when compared with her previous level of knowledge.

At the end, she has very satisfied with the results and decided to attend a 2<sup>nd</sup> e-Learning training course, this time about “Conception and development for e-Learning contents”.

#### 4. Challenges and barriers

Maria João Marques is a self-taught person. She likes to explore information and get involved in new training experiences and she is a very social oriented person. To her b-learning/e-learning as a learning methodology was very challenging because she could learn specific contents, according to her needs and expectations, in her own rhythm and timeframe.

Maria considered as an eventual barrier to the use of e-learning solution, the low level of digital literacy of the potential trainees.

In her opinion, e-learning or b-learning will only be interesting to persons with a minimum level of experience with ICT basic tools as Word, Power Point and Internet.

Maria stated that if people don't have a minimum level of practical knowledge about how to use these tools they won't be motivate and will consider the e-learning experience a waste of time.

Another eventual barrier is the amount of contents available in English. Maria pointed out the need to develop more contents in Portuguese language, in particular, for less educated trainees.

She also considered a barrier the fact that some e-courses are developed and implemented without knowing the real needs and expectation of the end-users. How will e-courses drive results in those circumstances? She also stated that it will be important to adapt the language, the training metaphors and the duration to the trainees' needs and previous level of knowledge.

She mentioned that the lack of human interaction within the e-learning systems, most of the time perceived as a barrier can, in fact, be seen as an advantage since each person will be online when they are really available to learn, to explore and to share the knowledge with the other learning community members.

In Maria opinion and taking into consideration that Medilabor is also providing vocational training services to its costumers, to invest in e-learning solutions to offer into the market is a possibility that should be considered.

Maria considered there is some market for it. For example, training courses as “Fire protection” or “Safety and Health at Work Technicians” or even “Safety and Health at Work Superior Technicians” could easily be provided on a b-learning solution, with theoretical contents provided in online sessions and practical contents provided in traditional training classes or even through on-the-job-training sessions. Maria, also, stated that, in that case, a set of investments both at technological and pedagogical level would be necessary.

#### 5. Success factors

For Medilabor and in particular for Maria João Marques the e-learning success factors are the following:

- Existence of user-friendly platforms with various communication channels available to promote the contact between trainees and between trainees and tutors;

- Existence of updated training contents;
- To mix traditional training with online classes;
- To use traditional sessions to motivate trainees and promote the team work spirit;
- To use simple and work related metaphors to design e-courses layout;
- To promote a link between the theoretical contents, that can be delivered online, with the practical contents, that can be explored individually or in team work exercises as demonstrations, simulations, real cases discussion, etc;
- To use the animations, graphics and multimedia effects to foster customers and end-users motivations;
- To invest in short duration courses.

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

Medilabor had no direct costs, since the training course was co-financed by the ESF and the participation fee supported by Maria João Marques.

Nevertheless, Medilabor had a set of indirect e-learning returns since Maria João Marques is already enrolled in a 2<sup>nd</sup> course. During the 1<sup>st</sup> b-learning experience she was able to invest her time and money. Maria considered the e-Learning as an investment to her and to company she works in.

Nowadays, she is investing in a 2<sup>nd</sup> course, also co-financed and this time she is dividing her time between her work and her training - she is no longer at home. Maria is attending a "Conception and development for e-Learning contents" course. This course is more ambitious than the 1<sup>st</sup> one: 120 hours, 18 hours traditional training and 102 hours online training.

What is more interesting, Maria directly involved her top level manager in the process. Her General Director and another employee from Medilabor are now enrolled in the same first course she attended!