

Whitepaper

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# HACKING DIGITAL LEARNING

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How to successfully implement  
digital learning in your organization



# INTRODUCTION

Hi and welcome to this whitepaper,

digitalization is changing the way we work and learn. Up- and reskilling are key factors for future success, hybrid work settings are becoming the new normal and organizations want to make use of the huge potential that lies in digital and blended people development measures. However, it seems like digital learning projects are failing way too often, resulting in low learner engagement and devastating completion rates.

At troodi, we want to provide organizations with practical e-learning solutions and blended development paths that have a strong impact and that can unleash the full potential of their employees. Throughout the last years, we have gathered a lot of data from different customer projects – from startups to SMEs and large corporates – and are confident that we have identified the relevant variables which make digital learning successful. In other words: How to hack digital learning.

“The future of organizational learning lies in digital and blended learning solutions.”



In this whitepaper, we want to share our top eight hacks to implement sustainable digital learning in your organization with you. However, this is not a blueprint but rather a collection of best practices. Some of the hacks will work perfectly for your organization while others will have only a little or no effect. Every organization is different and therefore every organization needs to find its way of hacking digital learning. We would be happy to support you in this journey, so if you have any questions regarding troodi and our learning approaches, feel free to contact us.

We hope this whitepaper gives you some food for thought and provides you with new perspectives and insights into the future of digital people and organizational development. If you have any questions or feedback, please reach out to us.

Best wishes,

Julian Wonner  
Head of Content



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# DEFINING DIGITAL LEARNING

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Before we start on our journey, we should briefly define the term digital learning.

When you think of digital learning, probably the first thing that comes to mind is the technology and the way the content is presented. From our understanding, digital learning includes e-learning, but it is much more than that!

So, what do we mean by digital learning? For us at troodi, digital learning describes a shift in mentality, which includes several aspects. On the next page, you will find our definition of digital learning.



# OUR DEFINITION OF DIGITAL LEARNING

- Awareness of the importance of constant learning & development in the modern work environment.
- A perspective on learning, where the learner has end-to-end responsibility and ownership over their learning process (self-directed learning).
- The mindset of supporting the learner on eye level, by providing them with everything they need to reach their learning goals.
- An approach that is focused on the individual needs of each learner.
- The use of technology helps to achieve the best outcomes.

“Digital learning is not only a shift in technology, but also a change regarding ownership, self-organization, and responsibility.”





# WHY DIGITAL LEARNING?

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Why is digital learning relevant? Is it really necessary to change our well-proven approaches in the field of people and organizational development? Why are we convinced that digital learning is more than just a temporary phenomenon?

We have identified six major reasons for the growing importance of digital learning in people and organizational development.



## NEED FOR UPSKILLING

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Digitalization leads to massive changes regarding the requirements of most jobs. By 2025, around 50 percent of all employees will need to acquire new skills to keep up with digitalization (World Economic Forum, 2020). This massive need for upskilling can only be tackled by including digital learning formats.



## INDIVIDUALIZATION

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In our complex and highly efficient world, employees do not need a one-size-fits-all solution but rather individual learning approaches that adapt to their needs. Digital learning based on a valid assessment can be tailored to the learner's specific needs and offer relevant content near the job.



## HYBRID – THE NEW NORMAL

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Many employees work remotely or in hybrid work environments. This way of working is considered to be the new normal. The majority of information outside work is already perceived digitally, be it Netflix, Spotify, Instagram, or Kindle – you name it. Employees are now expecting the same from organizational learning. And in the current war for talents, attractive learning conditions are key criteria in employer branding and candidate attraction (Schulte, 2010).



## SCALABILITY

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Organizations – even smaller ones – are becoming more and more globalized with their workforce scattered around the country or even the world (Contractor, 2022).

Combined with the huge pressure on upskilling, companies look for solutions that enable them to reach their complete workforce globally in a short time.



## COST – EFFICIENCY

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Digital and blended learning solutions can save costs in comparison to classroom training. In digital learning journeys, there are no expenses for travel and accommodation (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020). By using content that is customized to the needs of each learner and the option to skip unnecessary parts, learners need less time to gain the same amount of knowledge. Thus, internal costs regarding salary are lower in digital learning solutions. Also, even though more expensive regarding set-up, once created, digital learning content can be used again and again, reducing costs for internal or external trainers.



## FLEXIBILITY

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The work density is increasing, and employees struggle to find time for full-day training (The Guardian, 2021). While sometimes it can make sense to take the time for an offsite, it is getting harder to justify a three-day off-the-job training on, e.g., communication or self-management. Digital solutions make it possible to learn anyplace and anytime using microlearning. This gives the learner the freedom to choose the place and time that fits their individual needs.





# CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL LEARNING

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It seems like digital learning could solve all the major problems we face in people and organizational development today. Sounds good, right?

Unfortunately, the answer is not that simple. Many scientific studies and practical evidence show that most digital learning projects fail (Reich & Ruipérez-Valiente, 2019).

On the following page, we will look at three major challenges in digital learning in detail.

### LACK OF ORIENTATION

- In many cases, the provided content portfolio is too extensive and learners lose themselves in the number of e-learning – they just do not know where to start (choice overload).
- Often, there are several courses on the same topic available and learners do not know from what course they would benefit the most.
- Often, e-learning are designed to attract a very broad audience and therefore are not specific enough and cannot adapt to the individual needs of the learner.

### LOW COMPLETION RATES

- For most learners, motivation is quite high at the beginning of a learning journey (e.g., right after a feedback conversation) but then drops over time, as there is no perceived urgency.
- Often, life gets in between and there is always something more important – learners struggle to devote sufficient time to their learning project.
- Unlike in-person training, where you are "forced" to stay in the room, in digital learning, you can easily get distracted and leave the learning space, e.g., by answering a call or an e-mail.

### LOW ENGAGEMENT

- In many e-learning solutions, learners feel "left out there alone" without a mentor or a peer group on their side.
- Limited social exchange and missing rewards for their investment lead to a drop in motivation and engagement.
- Without social support or peer pressure, it is much easier to stop a learning project.
- This lack of social bonding results in significantly lower engagement.

**FULL POTENTIAL OF DIGITAL LEARNING  
IS NOT BEING USED**



# STATUS QUO

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Digital learning holds a lot of potential, but at the moment it is not being used. It seems that digital learning requires certain conditions to succeed.

# 8 HACKS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

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What is needed to unleash the full potential of digital learning?

In the following pages, we will present to you our eight hacks to help your organization make digital learning successful.



# HACK 1

## IDENTIFY THE NEEDS OF THE LEARNER AND THE ORGANIZATION

The motivation to learn is substantially higher if people feel a need to learn for themselves and have control over the learning process (Ellinger, 2004). Before starting a learning journey, it is important to support the learners in defining their learning purpose and setting their individual learning goals. The learning offers should match the concrete needs of each learner. Therefore, it makes sense to use a structured approach to identify these needs.

One way of doing this is a 360° competence assessment, where both the learner and their peers (e.g., lead, co-workers, team members) evaluate the relevant competencies and skillsets. In the next step, the learner can choose from a preselected assortment of learning offers, that match their competency profile.

Also, it is important to identify the needs of the organization. Is there a strategic goal that could be supported by a company-wide learning project, e.g., reducing the company's carbon footprint or implementing a new software? If a topic with high relevance for the organization can be promoted with digital learning solutions, it is much more likely to get management buy-in and the resources that are needed to implement the learning solution.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Support the learner in the definition of their learning purpose and learning needs. Make the learner set concrete goals
- ☐ Base learning offers on an individual needs analysis (e.g., competence profile or feedback conversation)
- ☐ Give the learner the freedom to choose the offers that seem most appealing to them
- ☐ Identify strategic goals of the organization that could benefit from a digital learning approach





## HACK 2

## PROVIDE CONTENT THAT WORKS

Digital learning is not just about presenting the information. It is about making the learner reflect on and engage with the topics, resulting in a deeper understanding and a higher level of mental processing. To be successful, the learning journey has to be fun and engaging!

This starts with the quality of the content. Here sometimes less is more. Rather than overwhelming the learner with information, it is helpful to identify those pieces of information that have high practical relevance for the user and to wrap them up in a catching storyline.

However, it is not only the content itself. It is also the way it is delivered: Using different media and including different forms of interaction keeps the learner's motivation up. This can be spiced up with gamification elements and little rewards.

According to Transactional Analysis, humans share three main psychological hunger: structure, stimulus, and acknowledgment (Berne, 2016). Great digital learning content feeds all of these hungers by providing a clear and transparent structure and storyline (structure), activating the user with interesting facts, gamification elements, and an engaging atmosphere (stimulus), and rewarding them for the effort that they have put into their self-development (acknowledgment).



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Ensure high quality and practical relevance of content
- ☐ Use different media (e.g., video, text, graphic, worksheets, quiz, etc.)
- ☐ Include exercises, reflections, and gamification elements
- ☐ Ensure an atmosphere of trust
- ☐ Deliver the content in an attractive, engaging, and activating way





## HACK 3

# ENSURE AN ATTRACTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

It may seem very trivial – but you have to make sure that the learner actually *can* learn. Some digital learning projects fail just because the content is not easily reachable for the learners. That is why it is important to ensure that all technical requirements are met.

Besides that, it is essential to also consider the non-technical requirements, especially regarding the question of dedicating enough time for the learning process and defending this time against competing obligations from daily business.



### CHECKLIST TECHNICAL

- ☐ Does the learner have a stable internet connection?
- ☐ Has the learner the hardware that is needed for digital and blended learning?
- ☐ Accessibility – are there any obstacles (e.g., pages blocked)?
- ☐ Simplicity – is it easy to reach the content (e.g., one-click access)?



### CHECKLIST AGREEMENTS

- ☐ Is the learning time considered to be free time or working time?
- ☐ How can the learners “defend” their learning time against other obligations?
- ☐ Is the learning completely voluntary or are there any obligatory parts? What consequences are implied if a learner does not reach their learning goals?
- ☐ Does the leader of the learner support them in their learning journey?

## HACK 4

# CONNECT DIGITAL LEARNING WITH EVERYDAY WORK LIFE

It may be appealing to outsource all responsibility for the learning success to the learners themselves. But this is not what we mean by ownership. From our understanding, digital learning approaches need as many accompanying measures as classic learning approaches.

If the learning content is not linked to the real world, it is very unlikely to be applied by the learners. Also, learning motivation is much bigger if the learning efforts are perceived and honored by the learner's peers. It is important to actively foster the connection between digital learning and daily business for these two reasons. We strongly recommend not only to involve the learner but also their social system in the learning process.

This can be done by learning ambassadors or learning curators within the different business units. These curators make a pre-selection of relevant content, are available to support learners with questions or problems, and motivate and inspire the target group for the learning content. It is important that curators are experts in the specific topics of the target group and can address them with the right wording.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Set up conversations between the learners and their lead/mentor on their learning journey
- ☐ Enable teams to discuss the content
- ☐ Nominate learning ambassadors that promote learning and support learners on their journey
- ☐ Use internal communication channels to raise awareness for the learning offers



## HACK 5

# PROVIDE GUIDANCE, ORIENTATION, AND MOTIVATING STRUCTURES

Not only does the single content format need a clear structure (see hack 2), but also the whole learning journey will be more successful if clear structures and processes are in place. From our experience, a successful digital learning project needs to find the right balance between ownership and guidance. For example, our troodi learning paths have a predefined structure with clear timelines and milestones. At the same time, the paths give learners the freedom to structure their self-learning individually within a certain timeframe.

Besides orientation and guidance, motivating elements are key to making a digital learning project a success. We recommend you to implement a high number of touchpoints with the learner – e.g., through e-mail, Slack, or Microsoft Team communication. Also, blended learning approaches which combine digital self-learning with live-sessions (virtual or in-person) have a positive impact on the learners' motivation.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Limit available options and support the learner in their decision-making
- ☐ Define learning journeys and provide a clear structure
- ☐ Create a high number of touchpoints
- ☐ Engage with the user regularly and motivate them to continue their learning journey
- ☐ Set regular milestones to align learners

## HACK 6

# MAKE USE OF PEOPLE'S NEED FOR BELONGING

After all, we are human beings, and one basic need of most humans is to be in touch with others. Social exchange is a motivating factor that has been proven to have a robust effect on success in many different settings, from dieting to exercise or abstinence from drugs (Cohut, 2018).

A feeling of belonging and social indispensability can boost the learner's volition and make them continue their learning journey, even when confronted with challenges. At troodi, we create blended learning paths, where the live-sessions are not only used to deep-dive into the content but also to foster the relationship within the learning group.

Combining the effects of social belonging and (positive) group pressure and commitment, we help learners to stay on track, even when their motivation is challenged.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Create a feeling of social belonging for the learners
- ☐ Use cohort-based learning with a joint kick-off and closing session
- ☐ Create peer groups, learning tandems, and learning communities
- ☐ If possible, create blended learnings paths



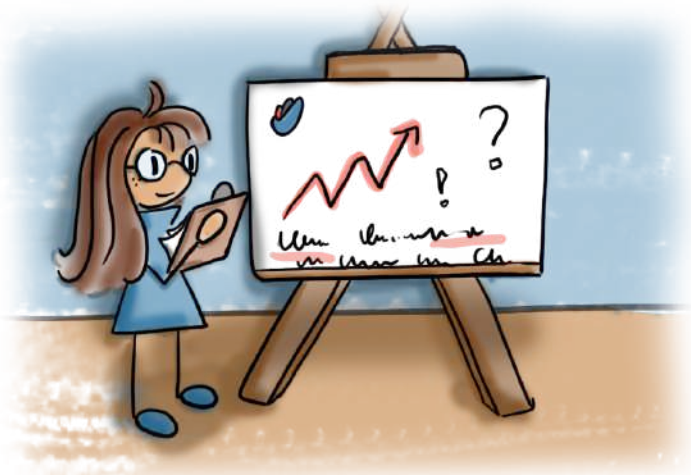
## HACK 7

## USE LEARNING ANALYTICS

There is one obvious advantage of digital learning, and this is the amount of data that is available about the learner and their learning progress, which can be used to improve your offers.

We strongly recommend analyzing this data to better understand the learners' needs and adjust the content and its delivery. Based on the data, you can also identify subgroups within your learner's population and address each subgroup in the most promising way.

Collecting comprehensive data on the main KPIs is a key factor to measure the success of a learning initiative. It can not only be used to improve the offers but also as an argument for the importance of digital learning for the entire organization.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Monitor learning progress on individual, group, and organizational level
- ☐ Identify and analyze relevant KPIs such as bounce-off rates, learning time, etc.
- ☐ Gather qualitative and quantitative feedback from the learners
- ☐ Use data to constantly improve communication, training design, etc.
- ☐ Measure the impact of digital learning approaches on relevant aspects for the organization, e.g., rating of leadership skills, aspects of company culture, or sales performance

## HACK 8

## ACCEPT THAT IT IS A CHANGE

Implementing digital learning is a change within your organization and a change for most of your learners. As in every change project, you need to be aware of the dynamics that can emerge and set up a project and communication strategy.

To win your target group, it is important to have prominent role models that support the change. Therefore, at troodi, we usually start our digital learning projects at the C-level and actively communicate this throughout the organization. During the whole project, it is important to communicate proactively, share success stories, and make it impossible not to notice that a digital learning project is taking place.



### CHECKLIST

- ☐ Identify role models and sponsors at C-level
- ☐ Set up a communication plan and communicate proactively
- ☐ Identify the early adaptors and use them as multipliers for your messages
- ☐ Share learning success stories throughout the organization
- ☐ Involve managers at an early stage, as they have a major influence on the learning behavior of their team members



# OVERVIEW

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## TOP 8 HACKS



IDENTIFY LEARNERS' AND  
ORGANIZATIONS' NEEDS



PROVIDE CONTENT  
THAT WORKS



ENSURE AN ATTRACTIVE  
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



CONNECT LEARNING  
WITH DAILY WORK



PROVIDE ORIENTATION



MAKE USE OF PEOPLE'S  
NEED FOR BELONGING



ANALYZE DATA



COMMUNICATE CHANGE

# SUMMARY

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Digital learning has a lot of potential to provide answers to the current challenges in people and organizational development. However, in order to work, digital learning needs certain framework conditions. The presented hacks can help you set the stage for successful and sustainable digital learning in your organization.

When planning measures, it is essential to consider your organization's digital learning maturity. The higher the maturity, the less supportive actions are needed from your side (and vice versa). Before starting your digital learning project, we recommend you to take time to analyze the digital learning culture in your organization or even in different departments of your organization.

Look for allies, sponsors, and influencers in your organization and get them onboard. And last but not least: Be confident to try things out, do not be afraid to fail but try to fail fast and learn from what you did. Not every one of the eight hacks will work. However, using an empiric and iterative approach will identify the variables that can make digital learning a success story in your organization.

We wish you a lot of success in this exciting journey into the future of organizational learning!

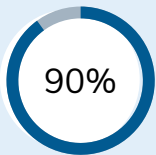


# ABOUT TROODI

Troodi is a start-up founded in early 2020 with the mission to use the opportunities of digitalization to build digital and blended learning solutions that help people and organizations to grow and develop to their full potential.

With a cross-functional team of trainers, consultants, developers, creative writers, and user experience experts, we strive to create digital learning experiences which make a difference – to our users and our customer organizations.

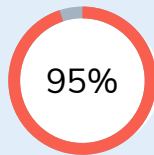
With our experience from more than 50 customer projects, we have derived those variables which are important to make digital learning work, resulting in completion rates of >90 percent and a user rating of >4.2 out of 5 for our digital learning programs.



Learning program completion rate



4.2/5 Stars  
User ratings for learning programs and usefulness



Recommendation rate for blended learning paths

Selection of companies that already use troodi for their people and organizational development:

**CWS**

**Eurowings**  
Digital

**gridX**

**sky**

**METRO**  
MARKETS

**hellmann**  
Worldwide Logistics

**IBM iX**

**trivago**

**RWE**

**CDM**  
Smith

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**Reifenhäuser**  
Technik

**TRUSTED**  
SHOPS

# GET IN TOUCH!

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Feel free to contact us for any questions or more information!



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