



Learn to Lead Abstract

Nearly all productive activity involves work by teams of competing and collaborating individuals, each with their own personalities, motivations and skills. The effectiveness and efficiency of the team is an emergent property of the dynamics that develop within the team in a continuous cycle of “forming - storming- norming and performing”. Effective team leaders manage these dynamics in ways that help the team to meet its objectives. As well as technical skills related to their area of business, they thus require competencies in “people management”, resource management and organization. Effective training in these areas is scarce and is usually available only in high quality MBA programs or in major corporations. In this setting, the goal of Learn2Lead is to design, implement, and test a novel, online approach to training in team leadership, suitable for use in SMEs, small government offices, NGOs etc.

The training provided by Learn2Lead will be based on an online game. In the game, each learner manages a simulated team of employees (e.g. a team of workers in a bank agency, a post-office or a local government office) which competes against other teams to maximize its objectives (e.g. profit, volume of services delivered, customer satisfaction). An underlying computer model will show the (sometimes unexpected) effects of player’s decisions (e.g. recruitment, training, incentives and disciplinary measures, organizational measures) on the dynamics and efficiency of the team. The system will allow the user to experiment with different approaches before competing with other players. Play will be asynchronous (players will not be required to be online at the same time). A script-based design will facilitate adaptation for use in different professional settings. The game will be suitable for use, both for self-learning and for learning in a blended learning environment with the support of a tutor. The final output will consist of (i) a Methodology Manual describing the rationale underlying the Learn2Lead methodology, the way the methodology can be applied in a concrete learning situation and the way it can be adapted for use in settings different from those for which it was originally developed; (ii) a Tutor’s Manual providing practical guidance on how to apply the methodology and use the software (iii) the complete set of server and client software required to run the game; (iv) technical manuals providing information required to install and run the software. Documentation and software will be released in English, French, Italian and Spanish.

Learn2Lead will last for 24 months. The work will begin with a study of user requirements, followed by the definition of the training methodology, the definition of the underlying team dynamics model, the “game design” and the implementation of required software components. An initial version of the game will be subjected to a pilot study to eliminate technical problems and guarantee usability. This will take place on three sites in Spain, Italy and France with approximately 10 “friendly users”/site. User feedback will be used to

refine the methodology and the software which will then be subjected to a large scale “summative evaluation” (approx 30 users/site).

A key goal of the project is to ensure the effective “valorisation” of project results. Two training companies belonging to the partnership will use the game to offer tutor-supported training to their commercial customers. In parallel with this effort, the partnership will provide free access to the standalone (non-tutored) version of the game, through servers maintained by one of the partners. These servers will be maintained in operation for at least 1 year after the conclusion of the project. Large-scale use of the system will be encouraged using online and traditional media (e.g. online publicity, use of popular “social networking sites”, distribution of CDs via newspapers and magazines)

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