

# Using change management to successfully transition to eLearning

By [Blaze Haselau](#), issued by [EDGE Education](#)

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Resistance to change is a well-known phenomenon - and making the change from traditional learning to e-learning can certainly be met with resistance, by instructors and students alike. In this article, we explore some simple but powerful change management strategies, to ease the transition to e-learning and to support individuals in adapting to the new system.



South Africa has one of the fastest-growing [e-learning markets](#) in Africa. This is evidenced not only in our higher education institutions, but also in the increasing number of corporate training institutions that are utilising e-learning. Despite the many benefits, changing from traditional learning to online instruction can be met with resistance – especially in South Africa, where e-learning could be a completely new experience for many. However, initial resistance can be addressed successfully, and should not deter anyone from adopting an e-learning approach. This is where change management comes in. [Change management](#) refers to a strategy that guides how we prepare, equip and support individuals to adopt organisational change. As such, it can be implemented to ease the transition to e-learning, and to support individuals in adapting to the new system. This will enable them to get used to the online format more quickly, and to benefit from it more readily.

## Causes of resistance

Throughout history, most major technological changes have initially been met with scepticism. However, with time and adaption, they have become commonplace in our society. Just two decades ago, people feared radiation from cell phones; now, we are hardly able to go anywhere without them. Similarly, it is easy to understand how those with no e-learning experience may feel apprehensive about it.

There are many reasons for resistance to e-learning. The below list contains a few examples:

- Misconceptions about online learning
- Miscommunication about the initiative
- Lack of training
- Lack of administrative and technical end-user support
- Low levels of computer literacy
- Lack of face-to-face contact with instructors or students
- Limited access to technology or the Internet
- Improper implementation of technology
- Un-user-friendly format
- Mismatches between the technologies and the actual context, culture or work practices

## Change management strategies

Change management strategies can aid the transition from traditional learning to e-learning, reduce initial resistance, and expedite the adoption of the new learning model. Below are some easy ways to implement change management strategies.

### 1. Lead through communication

Effective communication with all the relevant parties is crucial. This will help them to gain an understanding of, and acceptance toward, the e-learning programme. As such, it is vital to ensure that you thoroughly explain the initiative before, during and after its implementation, and highlight all the benefits and rewards. Open communication will also allow areas of resistance to be identified, so that they can be addressed – e.g. by providing the correct support structures. In addition, communication plays a vital role in creating a sense of anticipation and excitement about the new e-learning programme, before it begins.

### 2. Tailor-make materials

When implementing an e-learning programme, it is crucial to ensure that it is aligned with the needs and culture of the company or institution. Material that is not aligned with these values may not relate to the learner's and will increase the resistance to change. That is why it is beneficial to have a e-learning company develop the course material, to ensure that the e-learning will meet the student's specific needs and will ultimately enrich their lives and learning experience.

### 3. Convert early resisters

One of the first steps in dealing with change is to identify 'early resisters'. By recognising who they are, and what their reasons are for resisting, it is possible to address their concerns, and ultimately convert them into e-learning champions.

### 4. Training is key

There are two major barriers to e-learning: computer literacy and lack of familiarity. By providing adequate training and support systems, one can avoid unnecessary resistance, and help new learners to become equipped. Once they are able to use the system efficiently, they can begin to reap the rewards of online learning.

## The take-home message

E-learning is fast becoming a prominent mode of instruction. If you are not using it already, then it is time to start considering it. If resistance to change is one of your main concerns, bear in mind that South Africa has many excellent e-learning companies that are willing and able to partner with you. By finding the optimal solution, and implementing the strategies discussed, it is possible to transition from traditional learning to e-learning successfully.

## Editorial contact

Blaze Haselau

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