Boosting Online cross-border Sales for furniture and household SMEs

O1 - ACT3 - Report on Training Methodology and e-Commerce Strategies

O1 - Online Sales Manager Training Course (OSM)
ACT3 - Training Methodology and e-Commerce Strategies Definition

VERSION 6

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CONTEXT

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1. Introduction

BOSS4SME project will develop the European Furniture and household Sector through development of the Online Sales Manager profile, a professional capable of devising e-Commerce strategies for increasing revenues from cross-border sales through utilisation of the Internet as a sales channel. In order to achieve its goals the project will develop a training path and related tools aiming to equip furniture and household professionals with the right skills to start selling online, especially cross-border and increase online sales revenues by addressing a much bigger audience.

The Training Methodology describes how to generate the Learning Path for each trainee profile. In addition, it shows the training activities, material and support needed during the training. Finally, this methodology explains the possibilities about how to assess and appraise the trainees and the evaluation form/questionnaire that the students have to fill to show possible learning improvements.

The project, BOSS4SME, has been funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Erasmus Plus Programme – Action KA2 – Cooperation and Innovation for Good Practices.

2. Objective

The main objective of the BOSS4SME project is to develop a didactic methodology with e-Commerce strategies addressing company's needs with respect to the use of Internet as a revenue channel. The current deliverable presents the identified list of strategies that should be applied to boost cross border sales by efficiently engaging the foreign consumer. Additionally, it is also described the training methodology to be implemented and followed in the on-line course.

3. Cross-Border e-Commerce Strategies

3.1. Current Situation

Following the crisis, the global furniture market is now back to a growth path. In 2012, the global production of furniture was worth €361 billion[1]. According to a recent study on the EU furniture market situation, markets have opened up. The total world furniture consumption have now exceeded the pre-recession levels. Although the market recovery speed varies for high and low-income economies the EU's export potential in the global market is significant. Moreover, there are emerging markets, where disposable income is increasing fast, which are playing an important role alongside the large traditional markets.

A quarter of the world's furniture is produced in the EU. However, the consumption in the EU28 was still below the pre-crisis level. As potential markets are emerging throughout the world, EU can use this opportunity to boost its exports and strengthen their position in the market.

The distribution channels and the retail of furniture items have evolved greatly over the last decade and significant differences exist across countries. Although, directly managing Internet sales is not

[1] This estimate is based on CSIL processing of data from official sources, both national and international, that cover the 70 most important countries.

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the most important retailing activity, online sales have been increasing in the last decade. In particular, larger assortments, generally at better prices than traditional retailers, were really appealing in the weak economic situation. The main actors engaged in online furniture sales are both e-retailers and furniture specialists or non-specialists with a web store.

The advent of the Internet and e-commerce has also added another dimension to distribution. It is a fact now that the proportion of Internet shoppers has risen significantly. Although currently consumers are more likely to purchase online from national sellers/providers, this habit is expected to change as distance shopping is steadily growing since.

According to data received from national ecommerce associations, Ecommerce Europe estimates the number of B2C websites to have grown at a pace of 15 to 20% per year and set to grow even more given the growth foreseen in the upcoming markets in the South and the East, where B2C ecommerce is rapidly closing the gap with the more mature markets in North, West, and Central Europe.

Postal and private operators have reaped the fruits of the impressive growth over the past years of (B2C) ecommerce. Ecommerce Europe estimates the annual number of B2C parcels sent to customers domestically and across borders to other (European) countries at 3.5 billion, a number that will certainly continue to grow with the increase forecasted for B2C ecommerce in Europe.

3.2. Strategies to achieve desired situation

The need analysis of the BOSS4SME project (O1 - ACT2.2 - Report on skills and knowledge needs validation by the European furniture sector) concluded that the project should be focus on three skills appointed by professionals on e-commerce of the furniture sector. These skills are presented on Figure 1.

Figure 1. Skills required to close the gap between the desired and current situation

The strategies presented here below follow the needs analysis study and have as main target to close the different gaps between the desired situation and the current situation analysed in the furniture sector regarding e-commerce.

Figure 2. Identified strategies for BOSS4SME project

Figure 2 briefly presents seven main strategies for running a successful e-Commerce business. The strategies are descripted below:

3.2.1. Go Mobile!

According to recent research of Eurostat[2], the degree of Internet access varies among EU Member States, ranging from more than 90% of households in Denmark, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Sweden, to less than 55% in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece. In 2012 there were still significant disparities in broadband take-up by households, with a rate of only around 50% of households in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania.

However, Bulgaria and Romania showed impressive recent growth. The proportion of households with broadband connections in these countries doubled between 2010 and 2012.

Between 2008 and 2012, the highest growth – more than 30% – was recorded in the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia.

Top 5 European countries in terms of Internet access as a percentage of the population in 2012:

1. Iceland (95%)
2. Netherlands (94%)
3. Norway (93%)

[2] Source: Ecommerce Europe, 2013

4. Luxembourg (93%)
5. Denmark (92%)

For the European Union (EU28) the number of Internet-users is estimated at 378 million, or 75% of the population of the European Union. According to Ecommerce Europe estimates, in 2012 the number of European e-shoppers reached 250 million for the whole of Europe and 195 million in the European Union. This means around 47% of the total number of all Internet-users in Europe and 52% of all Internet-users within the European Union.

According to Ecommerce Europe, m-commerce in Europe grew to €17 bn or 5.5% of total e-sales in 2012 and is set to explode in 2013. Year 2012 can be seen as the first year of confirmation of the important place m-commerce will take in total ecommerce sales.

Ecommerce Europe expects that 2013 will be the year of the definitive break-through of mobile and m-commerce. The fast pace of mobile commerce growth is helping to drive overall ecommerce growth by converting potential bricks-and-mortar sales to digital sales for consumers using their smartphones and tablets while shopping in-store.

In regards to the furniture market manufacturers and whole face increasing competition. The marketplace is evolving, and with-it sales professionals must adapt quickly by identifying and seizing opportunities. Many have either replaced or are in the process of replacing their basic order-taking tools with sophisticated sales tools to improve sales. New innovative technologies are being deployed to improve sales efficiency and on the same time enhance customer experience. Virtual showroom mobile applications are now available and can free sales teams from their reliance on paper catalogs and lift the sales experience to a new level of sophistication.

The current strategy “Go Mobile” targets to enhance the overall buying service. New mobile technologies can be used to provide additional benefits and address different needs (Communications and media, Marketing tools, Payment tools, Customer and personal service, Data analysis etc). Therefore, it is important to understand the principals of m-commerce and start making necessary plans for adopting mobile technologies to your business.

3.2.2. Promote!

If an e-Commerce website is not promoted, customers won't be able to find it. A variety of free and paid advertising methods are available online for this purpose.

The approach could be step-wise, as follows:

Step 1: Apply Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to your e-Commerce website. This technique makes it easier for search engines, such as Google and Bing, to find your website. Sprinkle relevant keywords throughout your website to attract search engines. For example, if you sell second-hand clothing, use keywords and phrases like "online thrift store" and "buy used clothes." Don't overuse Flash or Javascript. Search engines have difficulty "seeing" this type of content.

Step 2: Start and maintain a blog that relates to your e-Commerce website. For instance, if you sell DVDs on your website, write articles about new movie releases on your blog. Link the blog and the e-Commerce website together. If a reader likes your blog, he may visit your website.

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Step 3: Find forums related to your e-commerce website. Use your website's URL as your forum signature, if allowed to do so. Participate regularly in forum discussions. Get to know other posters and tell them about your website.

Step 4: Add your website to Google Places and other directories if your business has a physical location. Google Places works best if you're trying to attract local customers.

Step 5: Look for other websites related to your e-Commerce site. Ask the site owner if they would like to link to your website. If they agree, return the favour by putting a link to their site on yours.

Step 6: Use the power of social networking sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to share your e-Commerce website with others. Make a Facebook page dedicated to your e-commerce site and encourage customers to become your fans. Use Twitter to tweet about your sales, special offers and news related to your site.

Step 7: Create business cards and pamphlets with your e-Commerce URL printed on them. Hand them out whenever appropriate.

Step 8: Ask existing customers to tell their friends about your website. In exchange, offer a discount on a future purchase.

Step 9: Buy Pay-Per-Click (PPC) ads. These targeted ads appear in search results. If someone clicks on the ads, they visit your site and you pay a fee. This type of advertising is quite effective, but often expensive.

The current strategy “Promote” addresses the "Marketing tools” need identified in O1/ACT2.2. The execution of various promotion activities according to a proper plan can direct and significantly increase the rate of visits to the company website and online store.

3.2.3. Achieve “C”-Commerce!

This refers to customer oriented e-Commerce and can be achieved via 4 Steps, based on a recent Accenture study

1. Adopt a customer viewpoint: The only way to properly deliver to a customer is to know their motivations and expectations, and then making business decisions based on this heightened customer viewpoint to meet or better yet exceed their needs and ultimately benefit sales. When following this rule, companies can take a huge step toward ensuring all the B2B, B2C, and multichannel marketing strategies work toward this same goal.

2. Create a new organizational framework: Extinguish silos and create the framework for an integrated channel experience by establishing a new organizational blueprint with inputs from across the business. A variety of members should be seated at this new collaborative roundtable – CMO, CIO, CSO, etc. – to create a well-rounded and seamless c-commerce approach for the customer. This strategy will also help stop each channel from cannibalizing each other or competing for the same customers. This new approach can be challenging and may require a cultural shift within the business, but it is vital for everyone who has a stake in this approach to be heard.

3. Tap technology: Companies should focus on developing an integrated digital platform that is well understood and used by the entire organization, across brand and geographies. The platform should also be scalable and adaptable that will grow with a company as technology evolves and allows for continuous testing to drive innovation.

Analytics is also a key ingredient when it comes to developing an IT and commerce strategy as the insights garnered from consumer data can help multiple departments, from sales and marketing to supply chain, to make educated decisions that could positively impact future business and the bottom line.

4. Nurture external relationships for your customers: Engage with external channels (partners, affiliates and franchises) that sell your products or services for yet another way to provide the customer with a seamless, easy and positive shopping experience. This can be done in a number of ways and a few examples include sharing product information with key retail partners to use on their sites where most customers shop, enhance websites with information that makes buying easier even if customers don‘t purchase from that website directly, and include trade promotions or digital coupons redeemable at retailers. If a company‘s commerce roadmap isn‘t up to par with a customer‘s expectations, the brand could encounter a drop in loyalty, a loss in sales, or negative comments on social media that could domino to other customers and impact further purchasing decisions. To gain a competitive advantage by creating greater value for the customer, companies need to develop a commerce strategy focused on customer behaviour across channels that can be implemented at scale.

The current strategy “Achieve “C”-Commerce!” addresses the " Customer and personal service” need identified in O1/ACT2.2. The strategy targets to add the customer viewpoint in the company’s business plan and provide all necessary knowledge for the proper client management.

3.2.4. Attitude to deliver!

International deliveries opening up markets outside of the country is now viewed by many as the holygrail due to the fact that, in a recession, this initiative has generated significant revenue to retailers from a standing start. The majority of retailers, large and small, offer some kind of international despatch. As e-tailers become more sophisticated and new ‘hybrid‘ international delivery services become available (low cost, but fully tracked), then we should see inter-continental commerce rise significantly.

In summary, the growth and sophistication of delivery offered by e-tailers is still advancing significantly. We can see a theme of e-tailers tailoring their offers to their customers‘ habits, routines and tastes. The introduction of locker boxes is encouraging. Customers can now order much later than previously to receive a next day delivery. There is even an uptake of same day services.

Retailers are recognising the importance of delivery as part of the overall ecommerce experience and the need to provide a range of delivery options. A missed delivery is annoying for the consumer and costly to the retailer. The convenience of knowing when a delivery can be expected is shown to be increasingly valuable with nominated day and Saturday delivery options offered by more sites.

Next day delivery is now offered by the majority of sites in acknowledgment of the demand for swift gratification.

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Meanwhile retailers, are continuing to test the market appetite for same day immediate demand for their products.

Setting expectations and maximising the chances of a successful delivery is a win-win for both customer and retailer.

Some key points to be aware of regarding delivery:

- Offer international delivery
- Make the delivery charges affordable
- Provide a better guide to customs charges
- Ensure payment works
- Be flexible
- Be clear about where you deliver
- Ensure delivery promise is kept
- Think about returns and refunds
- Enhance your customer service
- Support address capture

The current strategy “Attitude to deliver!” addresses the "Customer and personal service” need identified in O1/ACT2.2. The current strategy aims to increase the customer satisfaction and on the same time to increase customer’s trust and build a stable client base.

3.2.5. Serve and Protect!

The EU‘s ‘cyber security‘ Agency ENISA, (the European Network and Information Security Agency) has issued a white paper on Safe Online Shopping. The paper analyses the anatomy of ‘Online Shopping‘, and warns on the risks and threats. It provides different countermeasures and guidelines to consumers in the form of 5 ‘golden rules‘ on how to shop safely online. The paper also provides a comprehensive checklist for the online seller on how to operate secure online business. As many citizens lack trust in online purchases, this report increases awareness of the real risks and how to tackle them.

The paper concludes that online shopping will continue to be an increasing global trend. Yet, the biggest barrier is the fear of potential fraud or identity theft. This fear still keeps millions of consumers from buying goods or services online. This survey shows that 1/3 of those not having used the Internet for e-Commerce had concerns about payment security. Another 30 % had privacy and trust concerns. As ‘Trust and security‘ is one of the six major themes of the Digital Agenda for Europe, this fear underlines the last barrier for a bigger online economy.

The paper gives a comprehensive overview of the definition, history, the main drivers and trends in online shopping. It also looks into e.g. banks payment services, the underlying Internet Infrastructure Services and online/fee fraud.

The 5 ‘golden rules‘ for consumers cover the following points:

- Tips on avoiding fraudulent sites

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- How to protect your data when shopping online
- Tips for safe transactions when paying online
- Overview of legislation that protects online customers
- How to deal with completion of the sale issues

It is essential for cross-border retailers to be up-to-date regarding the various laws that regulate consumer transactions and to provide facts to their customers regarding their adherence to regulations and commitment to data protection.

The current strategy “Serve and Protect!” addresses the " Payment tools” need identified in O1/ACT2.2. This strategy will help customers gain trust on the online payment systems by integrating secure and innovating payment methods.

3.2.6. Attention to detail!

Attention to detail refers to the overall service provision and may comprise specific delivery options, communication, etc.

Delivery flexibility

Many retailers are still testing the price sensitivity of delivery options in the market with significant differences developing between sectors as competitors follow each other‘s initiatives. Standard delivery is alive and well and on the whole recognised as having a value which can be discounted for promotional activity to drive an immediacy to purchase or to increase the basket size.

Consumers can expect to pay for the convenience of knowing when their purchased product will arrive, particularly if a Saturday delivery is required but many standard delivery orders arrived within a couple of days.

Communication

There is a reduction in the overall publishing of contact email addresses and phone numbers for customers to enquire about products and services. As consumers become more familiar and comfortable with e-Commerce it may be less necessary however, more alarmingly, responses to consumer emails typically take more than 24 hours and many enquiries are not answered at all.

SMEs should pay attention to:

- Customer service phone lines
- Twitter monitoring and responses to enquiries directed to the @tag
- Text messages with details to remind the customer when to expect their delivery and offer the ability to reschedule if required.

The current strategy “Attention to detail!” addresses the needs "Communications and media”, “Marketing tools“ and the “Customer and personal service” identified in O1/ACT2.2. “Attention to detail!” should be considered in order to enhance the quality of service provided to the customer.

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This strategy can be applied in practically all situations thus providing the company with a competitive edge.

3.2.7. Mine your data!

This refers to employing business analytics for extracting useful information from all data available in order to increase sales and grow. The first step in the process is to establish KPIs for e-Commerce which need to be monitored.

Exemplary KPI‘s comprise:

- Unique visitors
- Total visits
- Page views
- New visitors
- New customers
- Total orders per day, week, month
- Time on site per visit
- Page views per visit
- Checkout abandonment
- Cart abandonment
- Return rate
- Gross margin
- Customer service open cases
- Pay-per-click cost per acquisition
- Pay-per-click total conversions
- Average order value
- Facebook ―talking about this‖ and new Likes
- Twitter retweets and new followers
- Amazon ratings, response and order turnaround time, and open cases
- Email open, click, and conversion rates
- Referral sources: percent from search, direct, email, pay-per-click, other

Monitoring

If a dashboard that is capable of displaying most of the chosen KPIs is not available — this usually requires a higher-end, highly integrated system — then KPIs can be pulled from all monitoring tools and dashboards into a spreadsheet on a weekly or monthly basis. This will provide a snapshot of the historical performance that identifies seasonal trends and necessary troubleshooting if KPIs deviate from their normal ranges.

Peaks and Valleys

KPIs are also useful to check normal cycles. In a simplified example, if suddenly there is a bump of new customers without obvious explanation, it is useful to look at the social media activity or referral KPIs to identify new traffic sources. Perhaps the “talking about you” KPI in Facebook is high because of a new product someone is talking up. Likewise, if gross margins are suddenly much lower, it may be because cost of goods sold has increased or because more customers are taking advantage of free shipping. In short, use of dashboards or any other tools that can be used to monitor KPIs on a daily basis if possible, is important.

The current strategy “Mine your data!” addresses the needs “Marketing tools“, “Data analysis”, “Sales management” and “”Product Strategy” identified in O1/ACT2.2. A proper analysis of the available data can reveal useful information that can be used to develop successful marketing strategies and thus increase sales.

4. Action List

The e-commerce strategies will be addressed through the learning material by implementing 42 action cards belonging to these 3 categories:

- Marketing tools
- Online payment systems
- Communication

And organized in the following 6 categories:

- Ordering
- Payment
- Delivery
- Communication
- Overall Service
- Promotion

The action list is presented in Figure 3 and will be presented in more detail in the ANNEX-O1-A4-Action_List.

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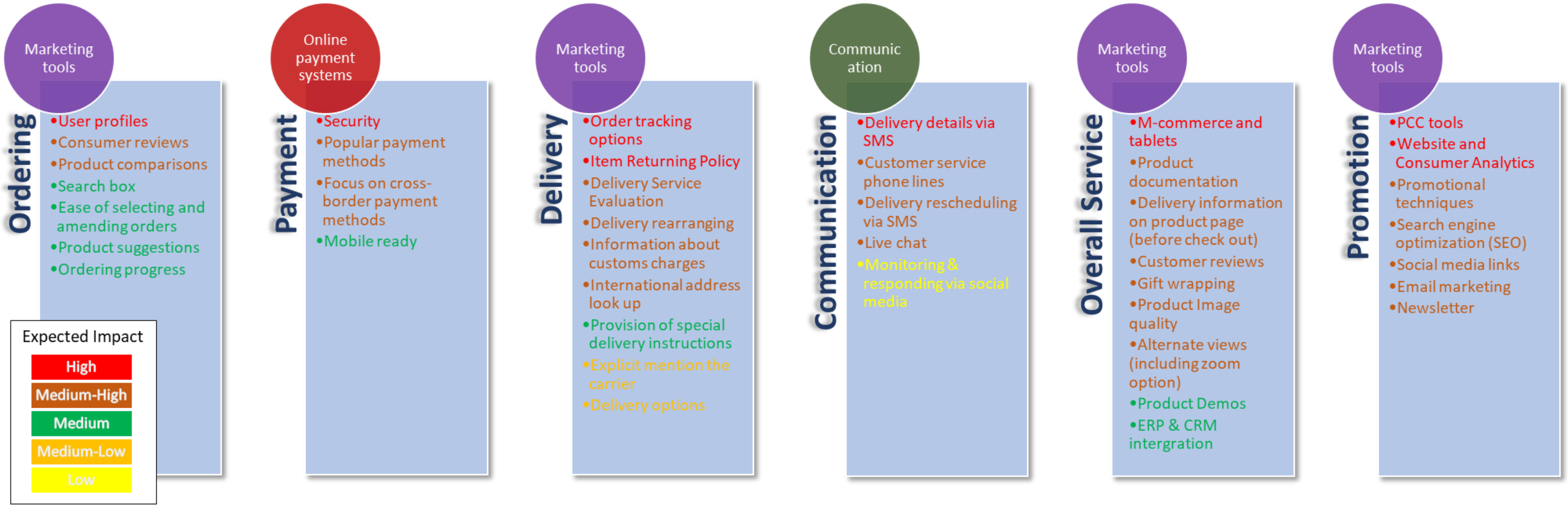

Figure 3. Action List for the implementation of identified e-Commerce strategies

5. Training Methodology

The main objective of this chapter is to describe the characteristics of the training methodology for the e-Commerce course for SMEs.

The Training Methodology describes how to generate the Learning Path for each trainee profile, which is the material and support needed during the training, and the training activities. . Finally, this methodology explains the evaluation process.

5.1. Learning Path Generator

The BOSS4SME platform will provide a Learning Path Generator that analyses the needs of the trainees and suggests the learning path. The path generator needs some input and, for this reason, asks 2 types of questions to the trainees:

- Questions related to the Individual Characteristics
- Questions related to the Business Sector

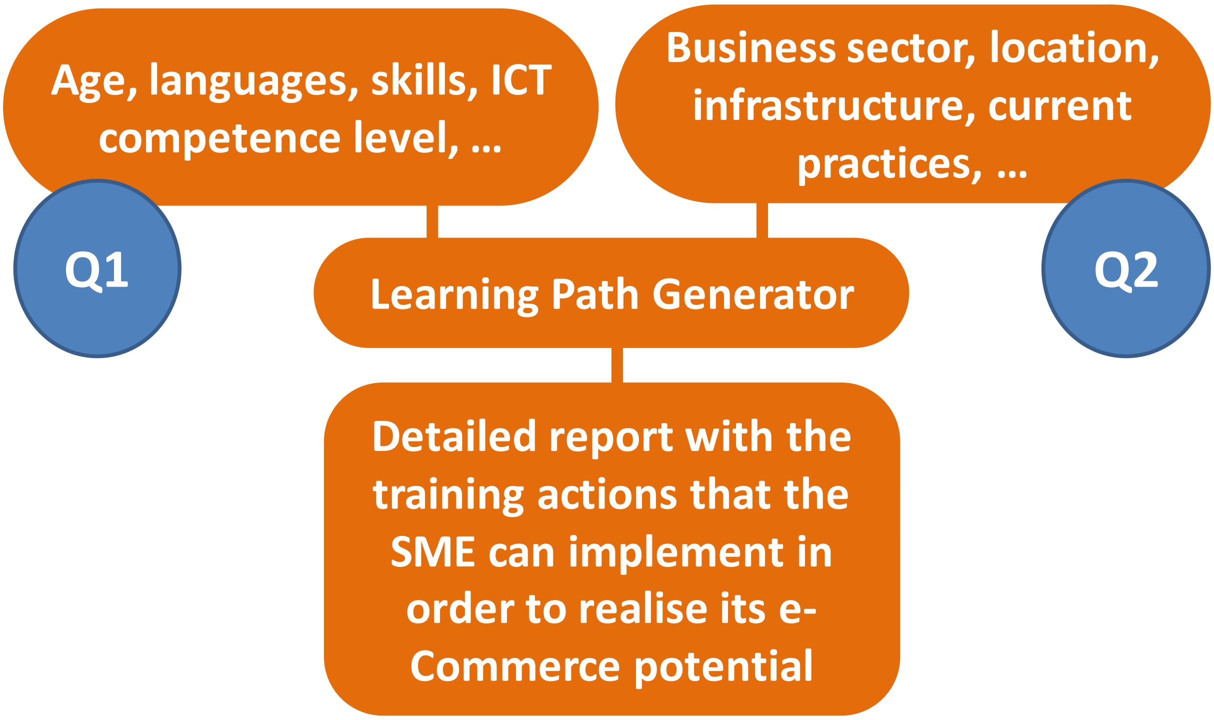

Figure 4. Learning Path generator

Depending on the answer to each question, the Learning Path Generator asks new questions that are pre-defined in one data-flow table. This data-flow table could be updated easily in order to improve and/or adapt new requirements or profiles.

The following image shows an example of the data-flow. The Question1.1 (that belongs to the group of questions Q1) has 4 possible answers. In case that the trainee answers A1.1.a or A1.1.b, the data-flow goes directly to the question Q2.1, that belongs to the group of questions Q2.

In case that the trainee selects the answer A1.1.c of the question 1, the data-flow goes directly to the question Q2.2, that belongs to the group of questions Q2.

When the answer to the Q1.1 is the last option (A1.1.d), the data-flow goes to the next question (Q1.2) of the same group of questions (Q1).

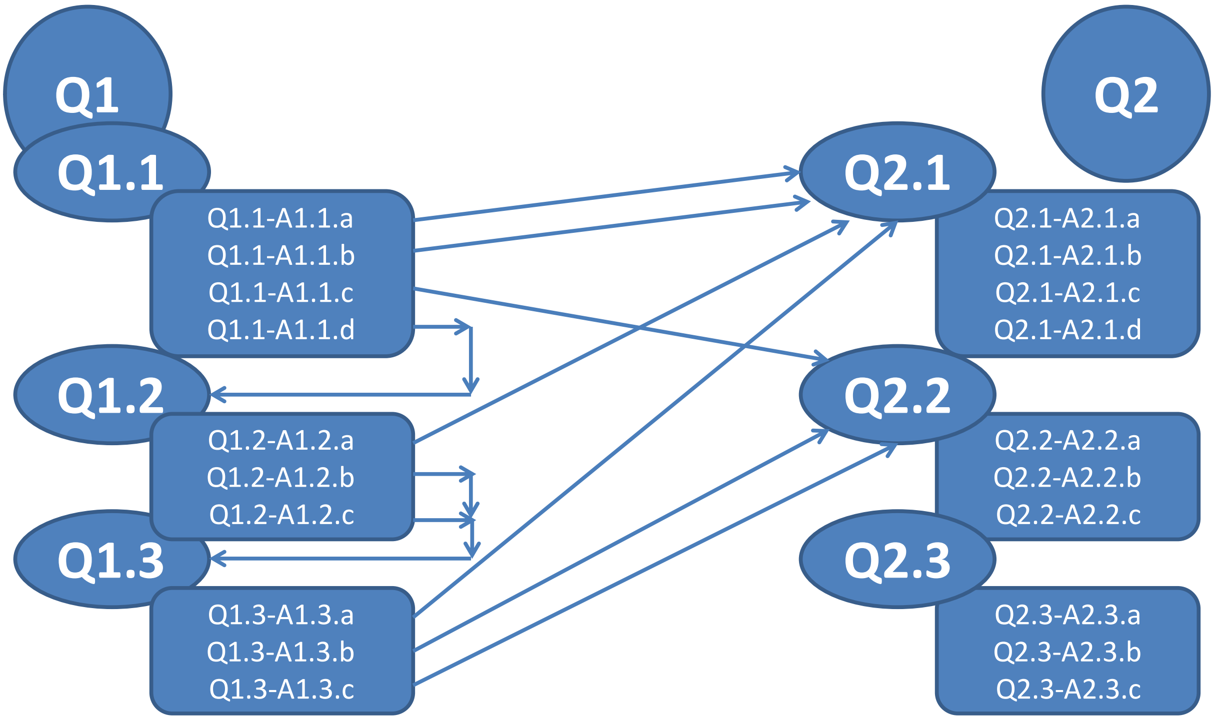

Figure 5. Learning Path Generator Data Flow

This example shows that the Learning Path Generator could be easily defined and updated with new questions and answers.

With the answers to the previous questions, the Learning Path Generation will define the training content to support the successful implementation of the actions comprising each strategy taking into account the specific characteristics (location, type of business, dispatch options, etc.) of the targeted SMEs.

In the following example it is supposed that the learning path generator has defined a learning path with 3 modules. Depending on the Learning Path Generator definition and development, it could create one different module for each of the 6 categories defined in the Figure 3, meaning that the learning path should create 6 different modules for all the trainees, or it could decide to group the learning actions in action modules, not necessarily in line with the 6 categories of the Figure 3.

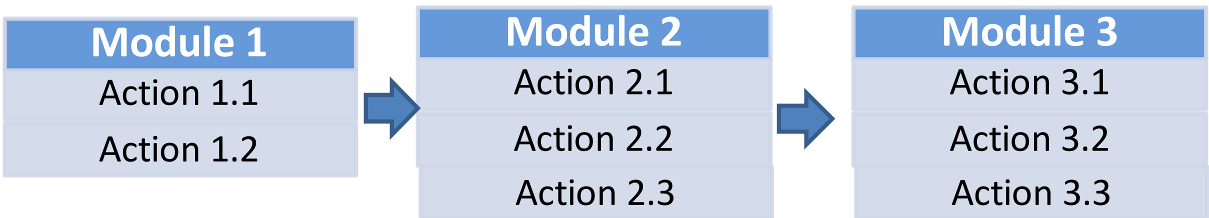

Figure 6. Training Path

The final part of the Learning Path Generator is the definition of the Learning Modules and Actions that the trainee has to follow depending on the previous answered questions. The modules and actions defined as a result of the Learning Path Generator execution must be identified as mandatory and/or optional.

5.2. Evaluation (exams)

The main objective of the assessment/evaluation is to verify that trainees have obtained their skills during the training.

There are 3 different types of assessment, depending on the time and the trainee information obtained:

- **Initial assessment (diagnostic assessment or pre-assessment)**: the initial assessment must be done before starting the learning sequences (action/unit, module, course) and should help to identify the learning needs.
- **Continuous assessment (formative assessment)**: the continuous assessment is the training way that allows evaluating the trainee progress, in a contrary way to a final examination. This assessment provides a complete and accurate picture in real time of the level of the learner because the students have to demonstrate constantly their knowledge level. The student learns as he/she goes along, instead of accumulating all the knowledge at the end of the course for doing the final exam. For this reason, the students need to demonstrate their knowledge on a regular basis, not just at the end of the course.
- **Final assessment (summative assessment)**: the final assessment must be at the end of the course to determine if the student has achieved the learning objectives and level. It is the contrary to the continuous assessment, that evaluates during the course.

Then, during the training evaluation process is necessary to take some decisions about the assessment:

5.2.1. When to assess?

In case of summative assessment, it is clear that the final exam at the end of the course will be the most appropriated solution, but in case of formative assessment, the continuous assessment could be done:

- At the end of each learning action/unit
- At the end of each learning module
- At the end of the course, once the training path is finished
- In all of the previous items

In addition, the learning platform could ask few questions (usually one or two) to evaluate the knowledge just acquired, during the action/unit execution (could be once, several times or never). The answers to these questions could be taken into consideration for the final mark or not, depending on the criteria configured in the learning platform.

5.2.2. How to assess?

The idea is to develop an automatic process for monitoring the student performance.

The following list, shows several possibilities for questions and answers:

- Unique answer (select one option form a list). The student has several options and has to select the correct one.

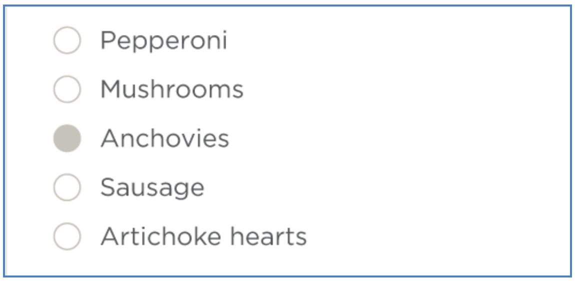

Figure 7. Unique answer

- Multiple answers. The student has several options and has to select the correct one: the solution could be one answer only, more than one, all of them, or none.

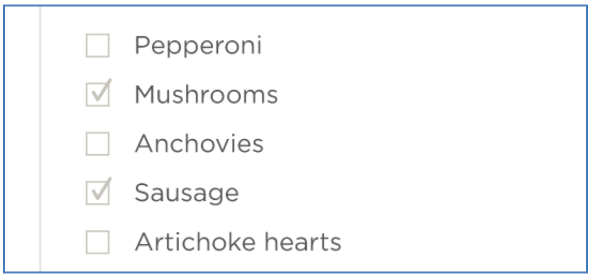

Figure 8. Multiple answers

- True/False. For each question, the student selects if the correct answer is TRUE or FALSE

Figure 9. True/False answer

- Connect. The student has 2 (or more) lists, and has to link/connect the items of one list with the correct items of the other list

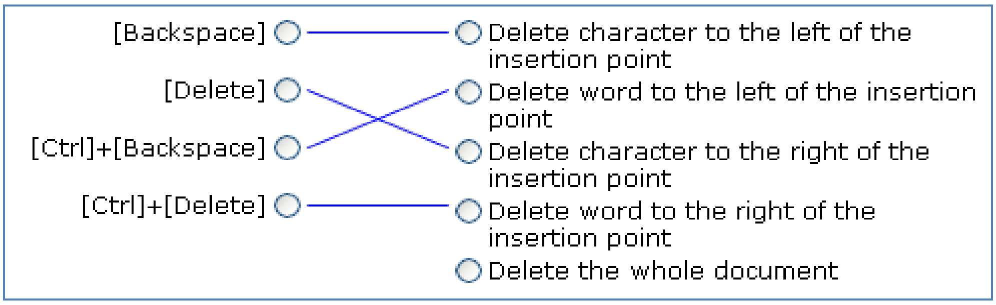

Figure 10. Connecting

- Drag and drop. Students must to drag and drop text boxes into a questions text.

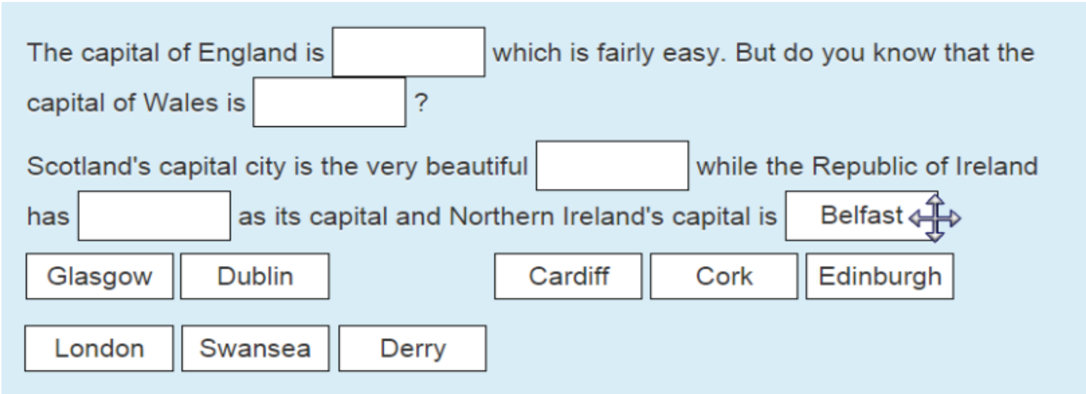

Figure 11. Drag and drop in a sentence

- Drag and drop. Students must to drag and drop text boxes into images

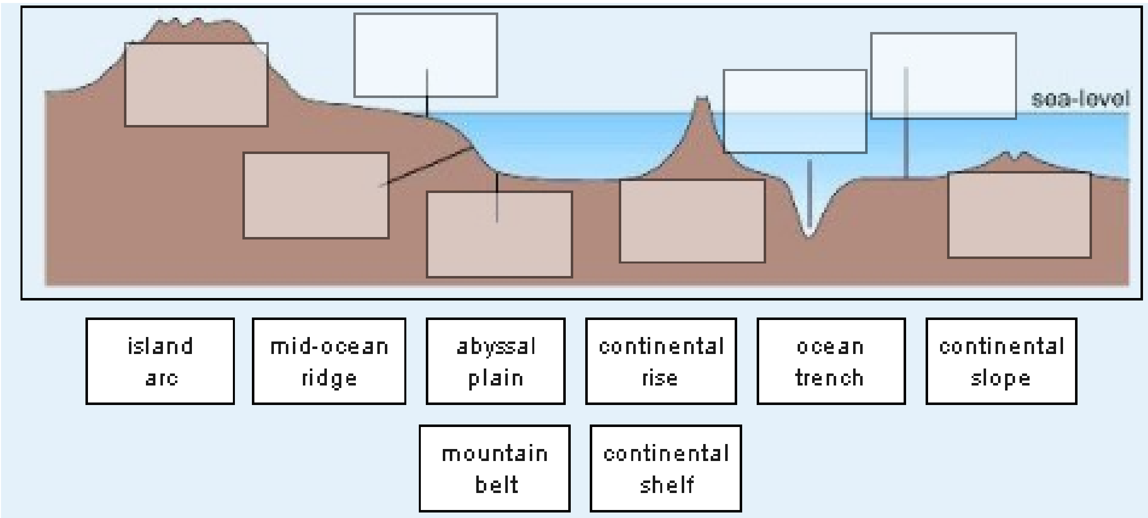

Figure 12. Drag and drop in images

- Write the correct value. The student has to enter a value.

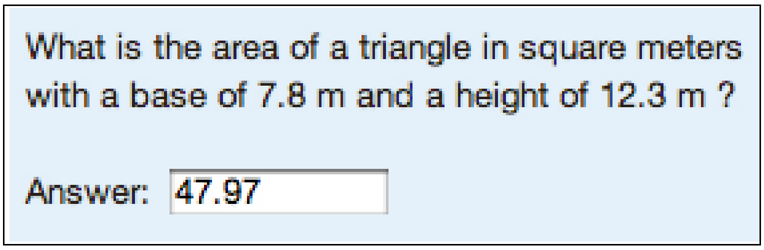

Figure 13. Write the answer

5.2.3. Some other issues to take into account in the assessment process

The assessment process is a complex activity that needs to take into consideration the following aspects:

- Attempts: The numbers of attempts allowed for answering a quiz question (or a quiz). The platform should allow configuring the maximum number of attempts depending on the type of question/quiz.
- Correct answer. The platform should allow configuring if the correct answer must be shown to the student or not.
- Incorrect answer. When the trainee selects an incorrect answer, and depending on the type of question/answer, the platform should allow configuring if the bad answer penalize the final mark.

5.3. Training Material

The BOSS4SME platform will generate different training paths to each students/trainees based on their identified needs.

The following list shows different types of training content:

5.3.1. Presentations

The presentations are one of the most popular ways to present information. They can include some of the other types of training material of this list.

5.3.2. Guides

A very useful tool in giving detailed information about one specific topic. They can be also used to show step-by-step instructions about a theme.

5.3.3. Reports

A report is a document that contains information organized in a narrative, graphic and/or tabular form. They are usually focused on specific topics or themes and can be find easily.

5.3.4. White papers

A white paper is a particular type of report or guide that informs readers concisely about a complex issue. It is meant to help readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision. When the training has complex issues, the support of whitepapers is an excellent option.

5.3.5. Charts/Graphs

A graph or chart is a diagram or image that helps to understand data.

5.3.6. Webinars

The webinar is very useful tool to substitute the in-person training.

5.3.7. Podcasts

They are digital audio or video which the students and trainees can download.

5.3.8. Games

They are designed with educational purposes with the objective to help students to learn about one specific topic.

5.3.9. Slideshare

It is a social site full of presentations about any topic, upload by their users. The site supports documents, PDF, videos and webinars as well.

5.3.10. Cartoons/Illustrations

They have more impact on learners and students than text.

5.3.11. Videos

One effective way of reengaging learners is breaking up text documents with video.

5.3.12. Case Studies

The students can discover real-life examples through the case studies, which provide meaningful content-related experiences.

5.3.13. Infographics

They make learning information very easy to understand.

5.3.14. Problem-Solution Scenarios

Case studies are an ideal form of this problem-scenario situation. There are many other ways such as interactive learning videos, question and answer quizzes, videos, ...

5.3.15. Simulations

Simulations offer your students to acquire experience without any real world risk.

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5.3.16. Screen Captures

Sscreenshots that can support to better understand in a graphical way, the training content.

5.3.17. Animated Gifs

An animated GIF is a file in graphics interchange format (GIF) that contains a number of images or frames in a single file. The images or frames are presented in a specific order in order to show an animation. Animated GIFs are an easy way to present dynamic content.

5.3.18. Checklists

Checklist is used to reduce failure by compensating for potential limits of human memory. A basic example is the "to do list."

5.3.19. eBooks

The eBook can apply to a large number of content in electronic format or more such as whitepaper, articles, ...

An electronic book (or e-book) is a book publication made available in digital form, consisting of text, images, or both.

5.3.20. Articles

An article is a written work published in a print or electronic medium. It may be for the purpose of propagating news, research results, academic analysis, or debate.

5.3.21. Blog Posts

Blog posts are normally shorter than articles, and for this reason, they are ideal for training.

5.3.22. Interviews

Whether in video, audio or text format, interviews can add complimentary viewpoints to the training.

5.4. Training Support

The BOSS4SME platform should provide the trainees and students the necessary support to explain how to use the platform, how to get support if needed, etc.

The platform should take into consideration the following functionalities to provide support the users:

5.4.1. FAQs

Frequently asked questions are a list of answers to typical questions

5.4.2. How to use the platform

Some content (document, video, ...) that explains how to use the platform

5.4.3. Chat/chat rooms

The platform could have a chat functionality for communicating and discussing (students and teachers). Chats and chat rooms are very efficient ways to discuss things in real-time.

5.4.4. Forum

Allow teachers and students to connect and collaborate in the platform. In the forum, students and trainees can exchange ideas and discuss issues and subjects of interest.

5.4.5. Glossary

The platform should provide a glossary with a list of the most important terms, with their definitions. The glossary is like a dictionary.

5.4.6. Messages

The platform should offer the users (teachers, students, trainees, trainers, ...) this functionality to send and receive private messages, without using the standard email.

5.4.7. Bulletin Board

This tool is very useful for announcements.

5.5.Student/Trainee Feedback

The final step is the trainees and students evaluation by answering a questionnaire. The platform should allow configuring when to ask the questionnaire: at the end of the unit/action, module, and/or course.

The BOSS4SME platform should collect the student's feedback to be used to develop new functionalities, improve the already existing functionalities, etc.

With the results of the questionnaires availablea report with possible improvements in the training materials and content, modules, case studies, support material, training methodology, platform will be published