
EMPLOYABILITY AND E-PORTFOLIO PRACTICAL CASE: BELDEN CABLE & WIRE

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Abstract: Employability and ePortfolio. Practical case: Belden company. A demonstration of electronic employability services at the plant of Belden Cable and Wire on the implementation of Lean Manufacturing. The subject of the case is the transition of a single operator to a multi skilled operator.

Keywords: employability, electronic instruments, in practice

Introduction

In The Netherlands the economy evolves more and more towards a knowledge-based economy, in which the human capital is an important production factor. The continuing changing requirements of the market demand changes in the industry. Companies introduce new production methods and new techniques in order to ensure a better market position. Companies stipulate their strategy and aim at the core competencies, being defined as a key role with which they can distinguish themselves to the competitor. The strategy of the organisation is therefore not only stipulated on the basis of surroundings-, market- and future analysis, but equally on required expertise and skills. Follows that companies look at which distinctive competencies they have to be more strongly developed than their competitors are. On the basis of this analysis the required competencies are determined. Because of this an ongoing development of staff becomes mandatory.

Employability is important for employers because :

- It is task broadening,
- It can be used in a broad and flexible way within the company,
- It guarantees the maintenance of staff,
- It is optimal to the use of expertise and competency,
- It occurs for early outflow.

At the same time, Employability is important for the employee because each individual obtains through this tool insight into their own competencies and possibilities. Employability means: 'the capacity of employees to fulfil several activities and functions adequately'. In other words, the degree in which an employee is interesting for the employer and the labour market. Employability of an employee is stipulated by the following four aspects:

- Presence of required competencies, which enables the employee to adequately fulfil various activities and functions,
- The willingness to commit these competencies in another function and/or with another employer,
- The ambition and personal aims, on basis of which the employee plans his career,
- Physical and mental fitness, in order to be fully and effectively able to operate in a profession or function,
- Knowledge and innovation become more and more important. We become aware that continuing education is a must. (lifelong learning).

Kenteq has a package of employability services, which can be used both by employers as well as employees. Kenteq implements Employability projects at several places together with the companies.

Belden Cable & Wire

The plant of Belden Cable & Wire in Venlo is a world-class manufacturer of signal transmission products - primarily for the entertainment, residential, industrial and security markets. The products they make must meet high quality requirements. In a concern to ensure quality and preserve their present market position it had been decided to reorganize the Belden plant. This touches both the organisation, technique and the work process. In the plant located in Venlo five different production lines employ 150 operators. In every production line a separate part of the process takes place. Belden decides to implement the method of Lean Manufacturing.

Lean Manufacturing is a generic process management philosophy derived mainly from the Toyota Production System (TPS) but also from other sources. It is renowned for its focus on reduction of the waste in order to improve overall customer value. For many, Lean is the set of 'tools' that assists in the identification and then stabilizes elimination of waste, improves quality, and reduces production time and costs. In order to solve the problem of waste, Lean Manufacturing has several 'tools' at its disposal. These include continuous process improvement (kaizen).

Both Lean and TPS can be seen as a loosely connected set of potentially competing principles of which the goal is cost reduction by the elimination of waste. These principles include:

- Pull processing: products are pulled from the consumer end (demand) just-in-time to be used, not pushed from the production end (Supply),
- Perfect first-time quality - quest for zero defects, revealing & solving problems at the source,
- Waste minimization – eliminating all activities that do not add value & or are safety nets, maximize the use of scarce resources (capital, people and land),
- Continuous improvement – reducing costs, improving quality, increasing productivity and information sharing,
- Flexibility – producing different mixes or greater diversity of products quickly, without sacrificing efficiency at lower volumes of production,
- Building and maintaining a long term relationship with suppliers through collaborative risk sharing, cost sharing and information sharing arrangements,
- Autonomation - if an abnormal situation arises then a machine or person must stop production in order to avoid defective products and other waste,
- Load levelling and Production flow - fluctuations in product flow increase waste because process capacity must always be prepared for peak production,
- Visual control - where the actual progress of work in comparison to daily production plans is clearly visible.

The operators have been trained on one single production line. In the new situation the employees must be widely usable and must grow over to the Lean principles. Kenteq has been asked to implement an employability program in order to realise the transition of a single operator to a multi skilled operator.

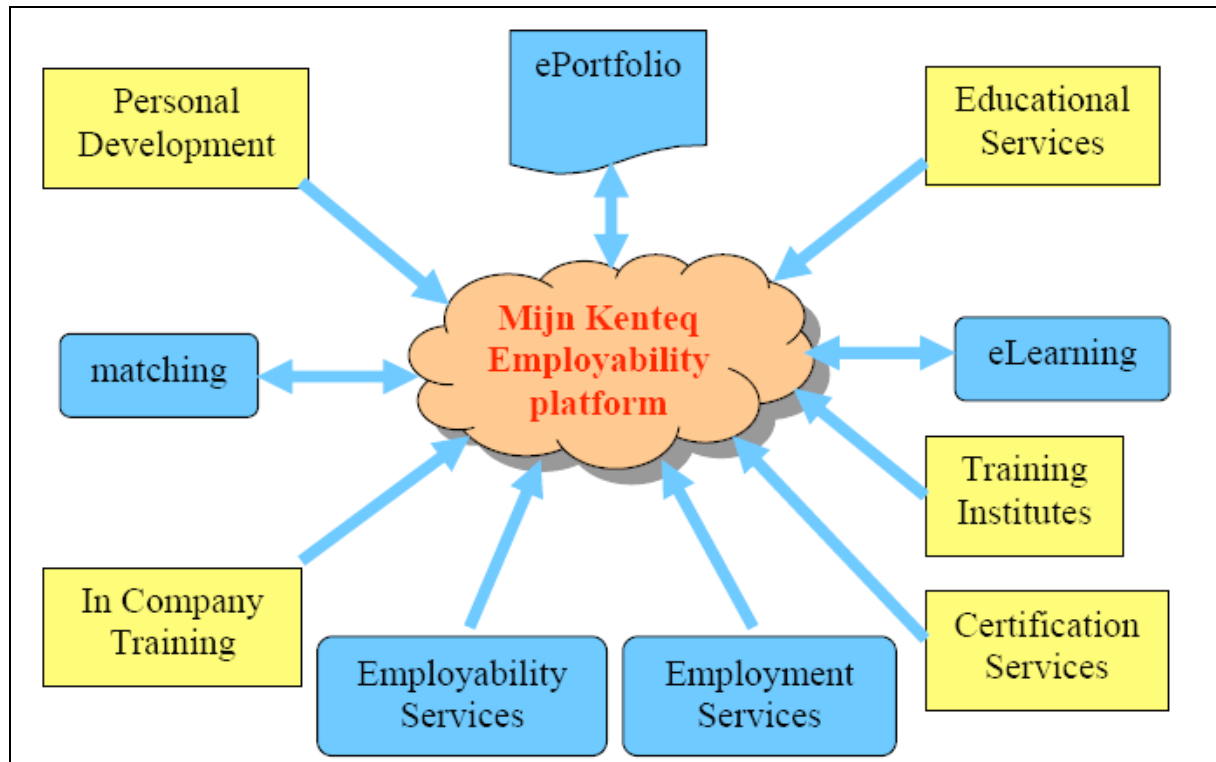
Kenteq

Kenteq is the centre of expertise on Vocational Education, Training and Labour Market in the field of industry in the Netherlands. The wishes and ambitions of both the business community and professionals form our main impetus. The business community and the professionals can therefore count on the experience and proficiency of top-notch professionals. Our professionals can fall back on a lifelong training scheme in order to perpetually enhance their technological talents and skills. Kenteq's mission is to enhance the proficiency of professionals in the course of their career. A professional career is more than a simple multiplication of the number of years someone has worked for. A professional career is the sum of the skills and competencies you learn and the functions you hold during your years of professional activity. These activities and functions are a constant input for one's portfolio.

Kenteq strives at setting up a generic vocational development model that uses a competency register and competency standards. This model leads to a panoply of results and actions, enabling Kenteq to

deliver a range of added value services. Currently, Kenteq is working on an electronic employability service package comprising a qualification structure, assessments, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), development consulting, learning objects, score measuring tools, and development tracking tools.

Employability platform



Solutions

At the Belden company Kenteq used for the first time electronic employability services by means of Internet. The employability treatment consists of three phases:

Phase 1: Analysis and recommendation

- Composing a Function Competency Profile for the multi skilled operator,
- Assessing a Personal Competency Profile of the employees by means of a:
 - Personality test,
 - Competency test,
 - Interview with the employee.
- Matching of the Function Competency Profile and the Personal Competency Profile,
- A development advice,
- A digital and written report.

Phase 2: A tailor-made job route

- An APL procedure,
- A personal development plan,
- A training - and coaching programme.

Phase 3: Realisation

- Individual training and education,

- Hands-on learning,
- Workshops.

Demonstration

We give a demonstration on Internet which clearly shows how the instruments work. Finally we show which data can be imported in the ePortfolio. The employee receives his **employabilityPortfolio** (based on eXact Portfolio), in which the results of the assessment have been mentioned. This Portfolio offer the possibility of importing the IMS-standard from XML

Conclusions

The introduction of an ePortfolio at employability projects in the industry is still at the beginning. The most important reason for companies to use electronic instruments (including ePortfolio) is cost reduction. However the benefits of using electronic instruments are still an issue. Companies are unknown with the possibilities from ePortfolio, and therefore it is important to start a promotion campaign.

Kenteq is very committed using technical innovations like the Internet, while in this project we discovered most employees actually never use the Internet. There were even people who never touched a computer. So there is a wide gap between developers and employees.

Technically there are some issues to solve using the idea of ePortfolio, like exchanging data from employability services.

- Identification of owner has to be arranged for the correct exchange of data,
- A method has to be developed to be able to verify and authenticate exchanged data,
- A guarantee of reliable and safe exchange of personal data.

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