



Growing

Career Guidance & Capacity Building in SMEs

White Paper

www.growing-project.eu

INTRODUCTION

GrowiNg — SME Growth and Innovation through Workplace Learning aims to develop, test, and promote the integration of innovative solutions for adult lifelong learning in the workplace. The project envisages the development of tools to assess and develop the entrepreneurial skills of employees through a holistic approach to career management in SMEs.

SMEs AS A PRIVILEGED CONTEXT OF LEARNING

It is widely recognized that companies and workplaces are **privileged contexts of learning**, being concurrently places where actual and future jobs are shaped, and employees' skills are raised throughout their lifespan.

How can this be done? Managers and human resources managers need to take a hard look at the SME and answer the following questions:

To what extent are we open to change?

What is the learning culture of my SME?

Where are the learning and growth gaps?

Do we have support from the different leaders?

Are those leaders willing to spread the word and cooperate to set up a learning organisation?

and set up a learning organization culture, defining:

1. Objectives you want to accomplish
2. Employees to be involved, their responsibilities and roles
3. Level of implementation of the strategy (unit, area or all company)
4. Initiatives to be undertaken, specifying the setting, resources, persons to be involved and timeline
5. The process of communicating the strategy to leaders and employees
6. Action plan for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and progress of the process

Which initiatives can be undertaken to set up a learning organization culture?

Self-awareness and readiness to learn

Capacity to accomplish personal goals, seek, and invest in learning and in behaviour change

Promote moments and practices of self-reflection for employees, essential to define a vision of themselves.

Shared vision

Leadership and employees cooperate to define a common vision

Promote initiatives to hear employees, encouraging them to take risks

Matching perceptions

The practices and initiatives need to reflect the strategy of the internal communication

Put into practice the strategy defined and the communications made.

Learning in team

It is essential to create a collaborative and cooperative environment, promoting the working in teams

Create work in teams, combined with moments of self-reflection, essential to develop the ability of understanding different perspectives

Cooperative unit

All employees are elements of a single team, with a specific role and contribution to accomplish common goals

Promote a positive environment, provide guidelines and feedback whenever needed, essential to ensure a sense of belonging

CAREER GUIDANCE IN SMES FOR A LIFELONG CAREER



A framework, like the one produced by the GrowINg project, which supports career guidance through learning in the workplace gets numerous advantages, and the initial steps can be taken at any point, by setting a clear and concise plan.

Get familiar with career guidance -> Set-up career guidance practices -> Take a personal interest in employee career goals -> Promote practices of self-reflection -> Joint career mapping

WORKERS' ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET AND SKILLS AS DEMAND FOR INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS

More than ever, companies need to invest in the capacitation of employees, allowing them to be the best professionals they can be. The success, progress and learning of employees depends on that, but companies can have a crucial role in creating the proper environment and opportunities, fostering their development and growth. One of the options can be by strengthening employees' *entrepreneurial mindset*, a goal to which the GrowINg project can contribute.

So, what are we reporting to when we mention “employees’ entrepreneurial mindset”?



THE USE OF GROWING PRACTICES AND TOOLS IN SMEs

It was designed and implemented a Capacity Building Programme for Entrepreneurial SMEs that presents all the designed tools, directed to SMEs' managers & HR managers, consultants, and adult education professionals to define, structure, and implement a career guidance strategy for employees, through adult education practices in the workplace and reinforcement of employees' entrepreneurial skills.

Capacity Building Programme for entrepreneurial SMEs			
Modules		Programme	Hours
Module 0 Capacity Building	Opening	Presentation of the Training Program: structure, tools and their decoding	3,5
		Launch and presentation of the final challenge	
Module 1 Career Guidance in SMEs	Session 1	Icebreak	
		Setting goals and self-assessment	
	Session 2	Presentation of the Carrer Guidance in SMEs	3,5
		Lifelong learning and career management at work	
Module 2 Learning at the workplace	Session 1	The importance of Workplace Learning for SMEs	3,5
		Proposal for the application of learning methods in the workplace	
	Session 2	Coaching & Mentoring: When and How to Apply	3,5
		Personal Development Plan (PDP): what it is and how to motivate employees to use it	
		Learning Impact Assessment	
Module 3 Assessment & strengthening workers' skills	Session 1	Assessment and reinforcement of employees' skills	3,5
		How to assess skills and strategies to improve workers' entrepreneurial skills	
		Presentation of the Competency Assessment Tool	
	Session 2	Sharing the results obtained with the application of the Tool	3,5
		What are the most effective strategies to increase skills	
		How to complete the final project	
Implementation in company – Preparing the Pitch			
Module 4 Final Project	Closing	Final project presentation (Pitch) and winning ideas of Entrepreneurial Challenge	4
			25

Portugal
Face-to-face

Cyprus
F2F + Asynchronous

Greece
Online

18 companies (adult education, vocational training, IT & Technology, accountancy, payment services provision, business association and health sectors)

29 participants

Each company implemented a pilot to define a career guidance strategy; implement learning at the workplace strategies; improve employees' entrepreneurial skills

> 100 employees involved

FEEDBACK FROM SMEs

- The formal career guidance strategy is easier to implement in companies with HR departments;
- Learning at the workplace and entrepreneurial activities can be done informally;
- The GrowINg tools are innovative and of high quality;
- It is not possible to implement all tools and activities in SMEs due to time constraints, but it is possible to select and start with some activities with the most impact;
- Entrepreneurial Challenge only has an impact if it involves all the organization, from top to bottom;
- The new editions of the Capacity Building Programme for entrepreneurial SMEs must have more time for the in-company implementation so they can involve more employees and test more activities;
- This Capacity Building Programme could be transformed into a professional online course offered to SMEs all over the world.

BUSINESS AND WORKERS' BENEFITS

Employees feel that they are a true part of the process

Employees are involved in solution building and not only in the problem identification

The Competencies Assessment Tools can be used in companies with small or larger groups, allowing the identification of opportunities to reinforce skills

Managers spend time reflecting on the needs of their employees, identifying different solutions to the problems

GrowINg tools are useful to increase colleagues' collaboration and to effectively plan their needs and interests.

Based on the Personal Development Plan, the career gets the first plan

THE GROWING APPROACH



OBJECTIVE

Ensure Workers' Career Guidance

Reinforce learning at the workplace

Promote entrepreneurial mindset & skills

Capacitate companies & HR managers



PRACTICES & TOOLS

Tips to companies on how to start

Recommendations for employers

Recommendations for intermediate organisations

Recommendations for policy makers

Assessment of entrepreneurial skills

Reinforcement of entrepreneurial skills

Promotion of entrepreneurial skills

Preparing the SMEs

Capacitation of HR managers



GROWING RESOURCE

Framework for learning at the workplace

Career guidance and learning in SMEs

Online self-assessment tool

Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees

Handbook for Entrepreneurial skilled employees

Capacity building programme for entrepreneurial SMEs

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPANIES AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

- GrowINg approach must be a continuous process;
- Employees must be involved in the implementation to reach success;
- Find out the suitable trainer for this Programme;
- Some materials can be used separately and it's not necessary to implement the whole training;
- Adjust the GrowINg approach to your reality;
- Start by defining a career management strategy for employees, using the online tool, and then plan activities/training to fill gaps;
- Apply the online self-assessment tool to your company and check the level of proficiency of your teams in the different entrepreneurial skills;
- With the support of booklets, promote the most attractive activities to improve skills;
- Get daily issues to test the implementation of GrowINg tools in your company;
- Give time for reflection during the implementation;
- Give space to your employees' creativity.

PARTNERSHIPS



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