



Do developers like e-learning?

This study, mandated by JavaBlackBelt in December 2008, explores how developers prefer to learn.

131 developers voiced their opinion, either in one-to-one qualitative interviews or via questionnaire.

- 115 developers answered a written survey
- 16 developers were interviewed personally

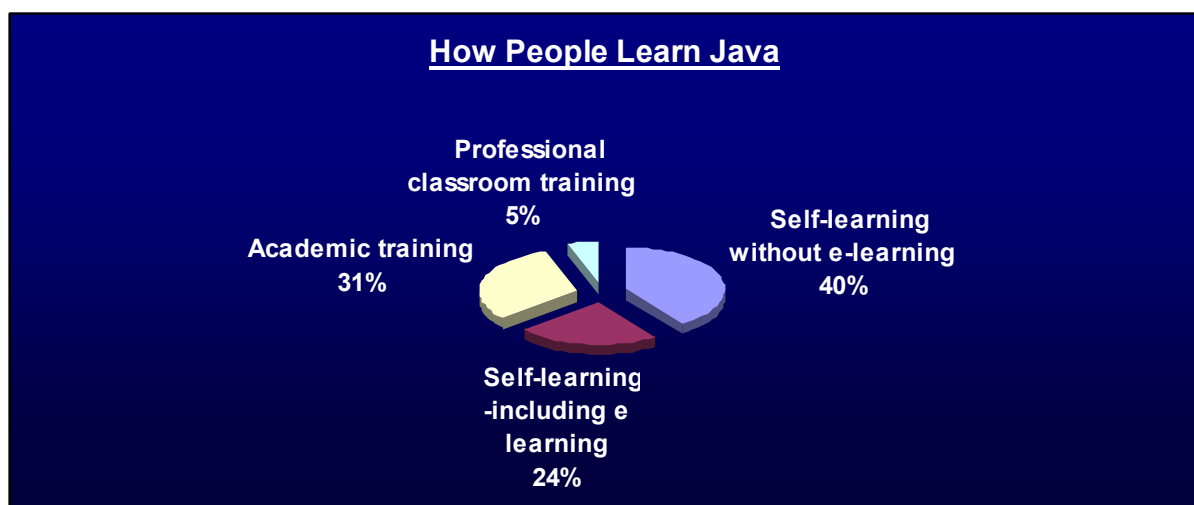
Read our summary findings to find out:

- How people learn Java
- The perceived disadvantages of classical courses and traditional e-learning.
- The perceived advantages of coached e-learning
- Which course elements are to be offered in coached eLearning
- Why developers take exams
- How many hours a week would developers spend on e-learning
- Would managers propose coached e-learning to their developers
- Do developers think managers would allow them to take coached e-learning

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How people learn Java

The majority of Java developers (40%) learn by themselves. 31% learn Java in school (academic trainings). A small minority of developers (5%) learn via professional trainings.



Among the respondents, 62% of Java developers have not heard about Java e-learning courses.

The perceived disadvantages of classical courses and traditional e-learning.

The main reasons why classical courses are criticised are:

- The level of knowledge of the teacher, and
- The incompleteness of the course

On the other hand, the main reasons why traditional e-learning is criticised are:

- The lack of possibility to ask questions
- The lack interactivity in the learning process
- Monotony of the tasks, videos and all kinds of assignments throughout the learning process

In both cases students need to look elsewhere for complements of the learning.

Perceived advantages of coached e-learning

The main advantages of coached e-learning are:

- Flexibility: to select specific subjects to learn whenever wanted
- Availability: to ask questions related 24/7

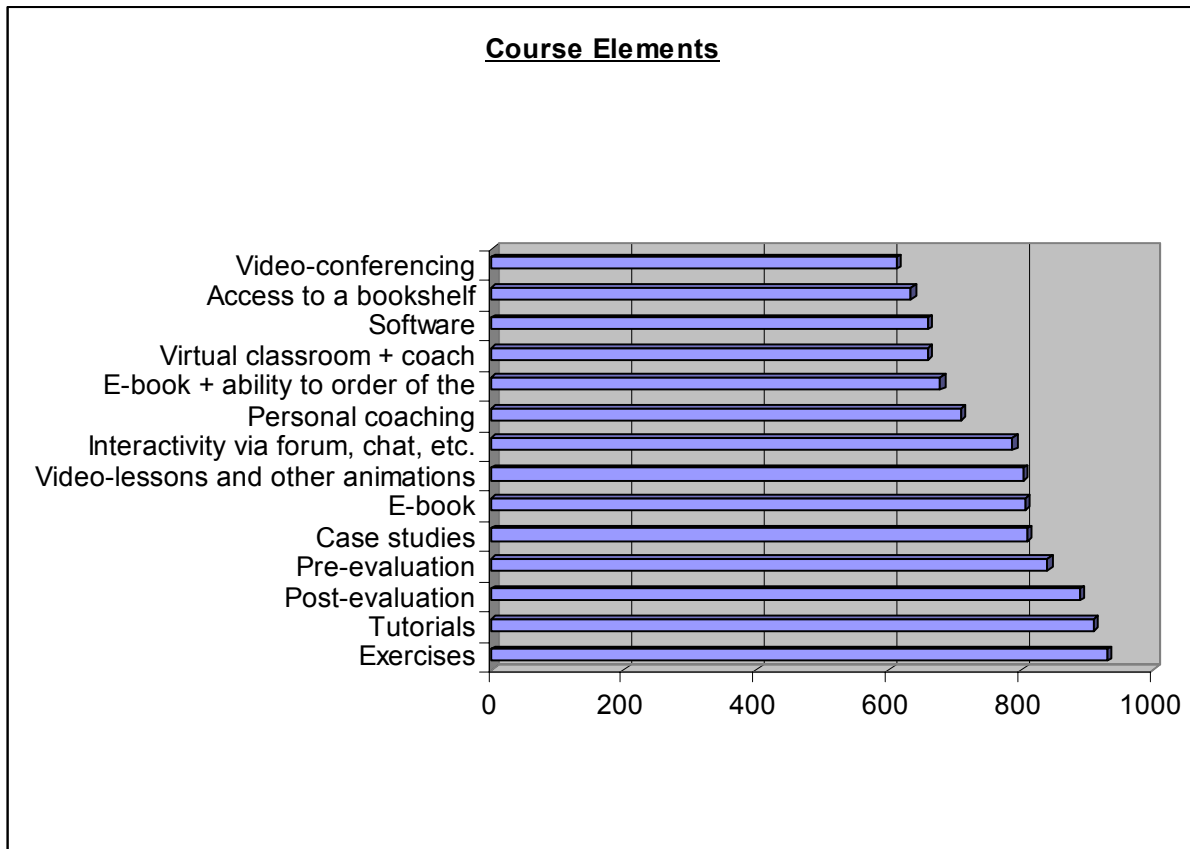
Moreover, a successful coached e-learning solution should have the following attributes:

- Complete & updated information: a large scope of subjects, and for each subject, all possible techniques of learning should be available to learners in their training program
- Variety of online supports: E-book, tutorials, videos, audio applications (but with a non monotonous voice), exercises, assignments, etc.
- Coach assisted: implying the virtual presence of an instructor with whom the learner should feel comfortable during the whole learning process, creating a spirit of relevant support and guidance

Which course elements are to be offered in Coached eLearning?

According to respondents, the main criticism to traditional learning processes is the lack of interactivity.

When asked to rank the different methods of distant learning from 10 (very important) to 1 (not important) , respondents ranked the different elements cumulatively as follows:



This result stresses the importance of being practice-oriented (exercices, case studies) as well as objective-oriented (evaluation). The interactivity however scores surprisingly low, compared to requirements voiced in our one-to-one interviews.

Indeed, in the interviews, the ability to ask questions right away while in the middle of the learning or the ability to be guided by a coach, appeared to be crucial to optimize the learning process.

For this reason we plan to conduct a follow-on survey to fully understand the interest for and role of a coach.

90% of the respondents declared that they would be ok with courses given in English (as well written as orally given). The 10% remaining declared that they would feel comfortable if English was the language used only in written supports.

Respondents rank the selection criteria for a potential instructor or coach:

1. Fluent in mother tongue
2. Temporal availability
3. Level of knowledge

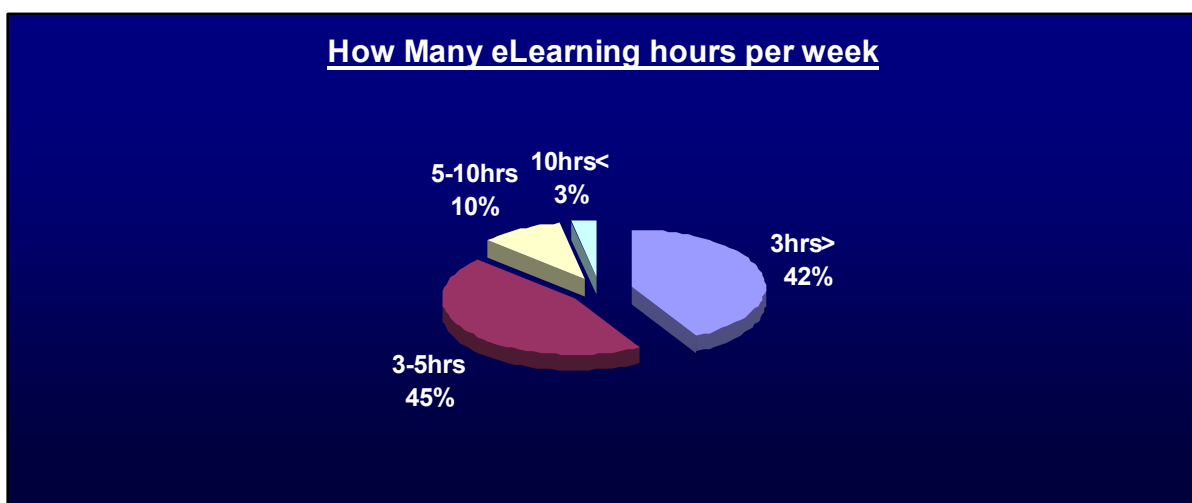
Why developers take exams

Developers who take exams do this mostly for self-learning. Moreover many of them truly enjoy taking exams, and it helps them to get recognized.



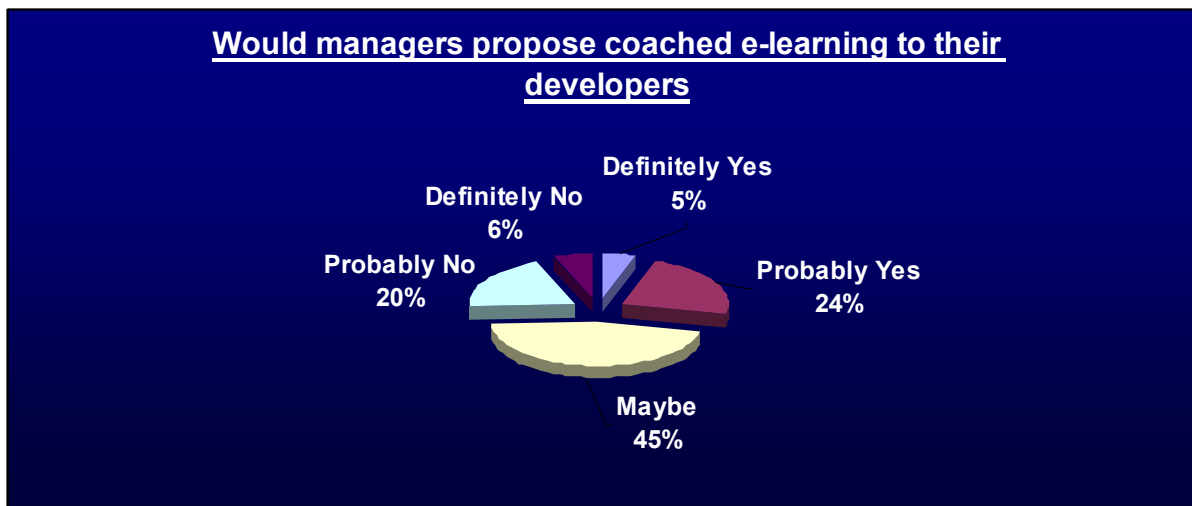
How many hours per week would developers spend on e-learning?

The large majority of developers (87%) would spend less than 5 hours per week on e-learning.



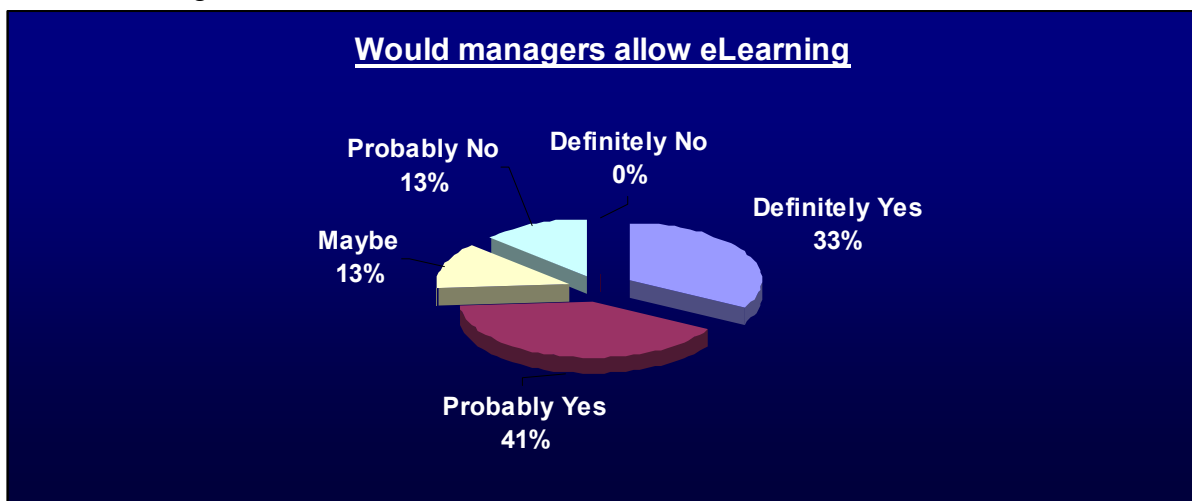
Would managers propose coached e-learning to their developers?

74% of respondents think managers are likely to propose e-learning solutions to their developers, even though a large percentage was not certain.



Do developers think managers would allow them to take coached e-learning?

An large majority of respondents (87%) think managers would allow developers to take e-learning solutions.





About the participants of the survey:

76% of the respondents have been working for 3 years, 50% of them are managing or have managed a team of developers in their career.

In terms of geographical spread, 72% are Europeans, 14% Asians, 10% Americans

Conclusion

This survey helped us determine the key fundamental necessary in e-Learning. It unveiled a need for coaching beyond the fundamentals of elearning.

Most developers (74%) expect managers ***will propose coached e-learning*** to their developers, and almost 90% of respondents think managers ***would allow*** developers ***to take e-learning*** solutions.

We are conducting another survey to determine the need/demand/requirements specifically for understanding the expectations in terms of “coaching”.