

E-LEARNING: A CASE OF BUYER BEWARE

E-LEARNING



The Covid-19 pandemic has forever changed the teaching, training and skills development landscape, with e-Learning being touted as the solution to maintaining effective health and safety training. However, it is now vital for decision makers involved in procuring and implementing health and safety training to know what to watch out for when sourcing and selecting e-Learning solutions for their business, writes Ryan Parker.

Schools, universities, SMEs and corporations around the world and across a myriad of sectors have fundamentally altered the way in which they provide training programmes for their students and employees alike, as they respond to this coronavirus.

For those involved in having to now make rather urgent decisions on how to roll-out effective health and safety training, it is and will continue to be, a steep learning curve as the market becomes flooded with a bewildering array of options, legislation playing slow catch-up and very real worries about spending, as money begins to bite.

However, fair warning – the wrong solution at the right price is expensive in more ways than one and not all e-Learning is equal or equally effective. The good news is that the technology and expertise, which makes it possible to rapidly pivot to viable, purposeful and manageable e-Learning is, thankfully, already in place.

And as difficult as this unforeseen disruption has been, trainers and learners alike are able to continue connecting with one another, through the power of a now somewhat turbo-charged internet.

FUNDAMENTALS OF E-LEARNING

At the heart of decisions made on e-Learning systems lie four

fundamental ideas, which can seriously limit the effectiveness of any solution.

The first among equals is the idea that an e-Learning solution is only a poor substitute for classroom training. That ‘traditional’ training is somehow better, more interactive, more experiential and even more fun.

Certainly, poorly-designed ‘just click through’ e-Learning, so common in compliance-type training, is no match for an entertaining expert facilitator, but this is more the long-term outcome of the business case for e-Learning.

During its early days, e-Learning was often focused on its potential for cost-saving and the number of people it could instantly reach, rather than its very real power for targeted and timely skills transfer.

So, before rushing to implement a system, it may be a good idea to ask yourself the following: Are we mentally just trying to squeeze our classroom approach into a computer app?

Secondly, is the commonplace idea that the only way to create experiential and interactive e-Learning is to go to the expense of producing videos. While video certainly has its place, it is in fact fairly rare for video to be the best or even a good medium for teaching.

Simply put; there are too few ways of assessing whether



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shareholders, if we owned a custom-built knowledge repository with fit-for-purpose tracking and reporting capabilities that our people will frequently and willingly use?

CONSIDER MINIMUM CRITERIA

With these four fundamentals addressed, it now becomes far easier to assess the capabilities of a particular e-Learning solution/supplier, which should offer you the following:

1. Rapid authoring capability; because speed is often of the essence.
2. Planned and unplanned training scheduling functionality.
3. Reach to everyone regardless of bandwidth.
4. Easy administration and management of access control.
5. Ability to up-scale content to include all the “bells and whistles” or to down-scale it when needed.
6. An established holistic quality assurance process ensuring your content is both correct and delivered correctly.
7. Easy access to off-the-shelf training content.
8. The foundations of a library of assessment questions.
9. Secure cloud-based record keeping
10. Deep-dive data-based reporting.

Ultimately, the goal is to help create efficient, compliant and safer workplaces. The right e-Learning solution can be a powerful tool to ensure that the right thing is trained at the right time, to the right people in the right way, so long as we stay true to the core purpose of health and safety training, namely, to help people return home to their families at the end of a working day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In his own words, Ryan Parker is first and foremost a “training nerd” with 20 years’ international experience in training, whose work has impacted the careers of some 100,000 people. He is also a Director for Dulann.com in Dublin, an Irish company which provides a range of health and safety online learning and safety management software solutions.

Ryan has designed, built and implemented traditional training, e-Learning solutions and blended approaches for multinationals across sectors ranging from African agriculture, Australian mining, UK banking, Indian ITC and Irish retail.

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a learner actually has fully engaged with the video unless you can afford Hollywood levels of production and then, even the slightest minor change or update to your training content costs more ‘big money’, lots of re-editing time and then after all that effort, it rapidly re-solidifies.

Before buying that silky instruction video with the smooth voice over, ask yourself: Who will pay for, find the time to and be available to do a fit and proper assessment as well as maintain this content in one, two or three years from now?

There is the sense that all e-Learning is pretty much the same and can be purchased from anywhere in the world because there is so little that is personable about it. This is untrue even for soft-skills and is downright dangerous in the HSE and compliance arena, where legislation changes necessarily from nation to nation.

Even for those countries within the EU, there are notable legislative leniencies, limits and linguistics that impact not only on the training course, but more importantly on how it is delivered. Therefore, before costing comparatively for any compliance content; ask yourself: What are the potential consequences of our people knowing the wrong thing?

Lastly, but by no means least, the fourth fundamental yet flawed idea, is that the power of e-Learning lies mainly in the learner’s experience of the content on which they are being trained.

This is certainly important to be sure; but it is not where e-Learning will add real value. Such value, in fact, lies in the Learner Management System (LMS), which not only acts as a container for the training content but more importantly, can be tailored to produce custom data extractions and easy-to-read reports which, when done right, can take a business to a whole new level of employee engagement and productivity.

Before you start searching for something off the middle shelf, perhaps take the time to ask: How much more would we be able to do for our customers, our people, and our