3 KEYS TO THE EFFECTIVE USE OF ONLINE SAFETY TRAINING CONTENT

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THE FASTEST PATH TO SAFETY AWESOME

3 Keys To The Effective Use
of Online Safety Training Content

When asked how workers would describe a typical safety training experience, the word "torture" still comes up far too often. Companies are struggling to create a thriving safety culture while facing the familiar training challenge of employees not being engaged or focused on the training.

There is not a magic training bullet that will meet the training and learning needs of every employee, safety manager, or company. But, a training program that incorporates the benefits and technology of online training content (eLearning) with the familiar touches traditional forms of safety training can take your safety training to the next level and increase learner engagement while also dramatically reducing accidents and incidents.

This white paper will look at three keys to the effective use of online training content to more fully engage employees, safety managers, supervisors, and anyone else with safety training responsibilities.

- Key 1   Understanding Why Learners Aren't Engaged

- Key 2   Ways to Engage the Learner

- Key 3   Ways to Engage the Safety Manager

Background

Aside from going digital, safety training really hasn't changed a whole lot in the last 40+ years.

Typical training scenarios often look like one, or a combination of, the following:

Scenario 1: A supervisor trudges up to the front of a room with a sign-in sheet in hand, maybe a handout or two, and a look of despair. He or she tries to get a group of employees, who are on their lunch break no less, to listen to a mandatory training topic. The same mandatory training they sit through every year. Half of the employees aren't even directly affected by the training, but better to be safe than non-compliant, right?

Scenario 2: Sam, the no-nonsense safety lady from corporate, has made her quarterly visit to an out-of-the-way location. She does some audits, talks to a few employees, shares some safety related information with the supervisors, and then spends the next four hours going through PowerPoint slides on the company's quarterly safety topics.

Scenario 3: David, the training manager, has been using the same homegrown Learning Management System (LMS) and online training content for years to train employees on safety. Employees see the same outdated, hour-long videos year after year. What's worse, the videos focus heavily on regulations instead of practical and useful information that would be helpful to employees.

The demographic of our workforce, available and emerging technology, job hazards, and even the types of jobs, has changed a

lot in the last 40 years. ***It's time our safety training did too.***

Key 1: Understanding Why Learners Aren't Engaged

Two big questions need to be asked and answered if we are going to tackle this problem.

- What causes training disengagement?

- What are the consequences of disengagement?

What Causes Training Disengagement?

Safety messages are always going to be fighting for space in a employee's brain and circle of awareness.

Personal Reasons

There are many possible reasons why learners aren't engaged in a training event. Personal reasons should be taken into consideration.

- The employee had an argument with their spouse before work.

- They have a headache or didn't sleep well the night before.

- Maybe they have trouble following along in instructor-led or lecture based training.

You may not have a lot of control over these types of reasons but there are systemic reasons for disengagement that can be addressed once you recognize

what they are.

Change in Demographic

One of the biggest drivers behind using online content is the change in the workforce demographic that is taking place. Many workers in the workplace today are millennials (born between 1980-2000). In fact, millennials make up the largest segment of the workforce and that number is going to continue to grow, so safety and training professionals need to be proactive and responsive.

Millennials process and receive information differently because they have grown up immersed in technology. Most of them expect and respond best to short chunks of information. They are also very "device" dependent, using their smartphone or other mobile device, to access information and connect with people.

Outdated Content

It can be challenging to keep training content up-to-date when mixed in with all the other safety responsibilities you're juggling. But outdated content is a major source of disengagement. Think about the message it sends to learners. Modern eLearning content has a fresh look, incorporates adult learning design principles, and can quickly be updated to reflect changes in regulations.

Lack of Relevance

If a learner doesn't understand upfront how a topic applies to them and affects them, they are not likely to be engaged in the message and will retain very little of the training.

A training or course that lacks meaningful stories and examples to connect the learner to the

CONSEQUENCES OF DISENGAGEMENT

At a minimum safety training should:

1. Identify and explain the hazards of a job, task, process, or environment. For example:

   • Hazards found in confined work.

   • Dangers associated with not following lockout/tagout procedures.

   • Risks of using the wrong type of ladder.

2. Cover ways to protect against hazards that can't be removed or made safe. This would include such controls as:

   • Engineering controls

   • Work practice controls

   • Personal protective equipment

3. The "When", "How", and "Who" of hazard response. Examples include:

   • When to report a hazard, unsafe condition, near-miss, or injury.

   • How to report these concerns.

   • Who to report these issues to.

If these minimum objectives aren't met, likely consequences include:

1. Unsafe work conditions

2. Unsafe work practices

3. Injury

4. Death

5. Catastrophic events (Multiple casualties and significant damage to property and the environment   i.e., Deepwater Horizon explosion, Upper Big Branch mine explosion.)

material makes it hard for learners to visualize themselves in a similar situation or see the potential hazards as real. This makes it easier for them to hold onto the common mindset of "**that'll never happen to me.**"

Information Overload

Humans can only handle so much information at a time. Throwing a bunch of regulatory jargon, statistics, and detailed processes at a learner is a good way to

Example 1: Fire Extinguisher Course

Example 2: Spot the Hazard

ensure NOTHING sticks in their memory. Our short-term memories can only process and remember about 3-5 things at once. The rest gets filtered out by our brains. If the 3-5 bits of information do manage to make it into our short-term memory, without meaning, relevance, and follow-up, that information will quickly be lost. In fact, most learners forget 70% of what they learn within 24 hours of learning it.

Lack of Purposeful Interactions

A lot of online training content labels itself as "interactive", but if the interactions simply consist of clicking the "Next" button how interactive is it? Purposeful interactions work to help a learner make those important connections in their memory, making understanding and retention more likely.

KEY 2 - Engaging the Learner

Not only do the minimum training objectives need to be met, the training message needs to be relevant and understood for it to stick with learners after it's over. How can online training help accomplish this?

Focus on Content

Learner engagement starts by

choosing relatable and relevant content. This includes:

- Correct and Current Content created by subject matter experts in safety and instructional design who know the regulations and how to design content for adult learners.

- Short and Sweet Typically courses should be no more than 20 minutes to accommodate average attention spans.

- Powerful Storytelling Featuring real stories and scenarios to grab a learner's attention and show how the information is important and relevant to them.

- Simple and Intuitive to use Reduces the number of calls to and time spent with technical support.

- Modern Highly interactive, no mullets, no cheesy or cringe-worthy moments.

Using online training courses to create experiences that are memorable and immersive by using images, media, and interactions, can increase engagement and retention.

Example 1: In this course on fire extinguishers, employees learn about essential fire extinguisher and fire safety concepts through listening, reading, and doing. Workers will use their mouse to practice putting out a fire and learning the techniques they need to remember when stakes are high aim at the base of the fire and sweep side to side. So, the learner not only hears and sees the message, but gets to practice the motor skills they will use in real life .

Example 2: Other immersive techniques include the use of missions or challenges in the form of scenarios like spot-the-hazard activities. These activities reinforce the information that was just presented and the learner must complete these activities as they go through a course.

In this screenshot example, the learner must select all the ways to prevent transmission of bloodborne pathogens there are six in this scene and as you can see I've already found one.

One of the big benefits of online training is the almost endless possibilities for creating these types of activities and allowing employees to learn in a safe and controlled environment.

Frequent Feedback

It is important for any online training to provide adequate feedback. Well-timed feedback is an important tool that can be used to engage a learner. In online training, feedback can come from learning activities, quizzes and other test your knowledge activities. This quiz from a hand and power tool course shows the learner what they missed and the correct answers .

Onscreen notifications, pop-ups for definitions, a help button, or kudos for completing a task are also examples of feedback.

The use of instant messaging apps and other help tools are additional ways to provide feedback and engagement. This can be especially helpful to learners who may be hesitant to speak up during instructor-led training and ask questions or ask for help on concepts they don't understand.

Another benefit of online content is the feedback a learner receives within the course will be consistent. The same can't always be said if you're dealing with multiple locations and supervisors. It can be hard to determine what the message is and how it's being delivered.

Are We There Yet?

When beginning a project, taking a trip, and yes, even when in training, most of us want to know upfront where are going, how long it will take to get there, and how much longer until we reach our destination.

In online learning, an agenda or objectives slide outlining what topics the course is going cover, a status bar showing how much time is left or a tally box showing the number of items left to find in a challenge and a help button to show to use the navigation controls can alleviate the "are we there yet?" stress that often comes with online training.

Follow-Up

Learning shouldn't end when the training is over. Providing meaningful follow-up events after training will help reinforce the message, allow learners to express concerns or ask questions, and give safety managers and supervisors insight into how well the training was received, as well as any gaps that need to be addressed.

KEY 3 - Engaging the Safety Manager

Both learners and managers can suffer from disengagement when it comes to training. As someone responsible for safety training you can increase your engagement, and in turn, the level of engagement of your employees, by incorporating these tips.

Importance of Insight

To have an effective and compliant safety training program you must first:

- Identify safety-related hazards and regulatory requirements applicable to your location(s), processes, jobs, tasks.

- Create a training plan, based on that information.

These two things will provide insight into what training needs to be done, who needs to be trained, and what they need to be trained on. It's a waste of time and resources to assign the same training out to everyone without giving thought to what training is relevant to which employees. It's also a sure way to reduce employee engagement.

Reaching Multiple Locations

Remote workers and workers at different locations must be trained. Do you have a plan for

how that will happen? Things to consider:

- Who is conducting the training.

- What message they are conveying.

- What materials they are using for content.

With eLearning, each of these questions is answered and visible in real time. What's more, you have confidence in how the training is being done, what the message is, and what training materials are being used. It can also cut travel expenses drastically. Another plus, you can spend your time at these locations doing things that could have more of an impact on workplace safety.

Testing, Testing, 1,2,3

How can you measure competency and retention if you aren't incorporating testing into your training program? You can't. What you're left with is the hope that employees understood and will remember the training. How confident are you in the odds that hope will keep your workers safe?

Online content almost always comes with an assessment of some sort at the end of the training. What's even better, is that you don't have to spend time creating a test, grading the tests, or figuring out how to track and analyze the data. It will be done for you as part of the learning management system the course is being delivered through.

This is important because, it's not enough to just test employees, you must look at the results and determine what they are telling you. For example, are certain workers, shifts, or departments struggling with a concept?

Testing doesn't have to be just a traditional test of choosing the correct answer to a question. It can be fun, and fun is engaging. Other forms of testing might include a demonstration of skills, or a pop-quiz as you're doing an inspection.

Follow-Up

Follow-up isn't just a great way to engage workers, it's a great way for safety managers and supervisors to stay engaged with the workforce. How are you following up after training?

- Are you out on the floor or in the field, seeing if the training is working?

  - Are people following safe work practices and policies they've learned?

  - Can they answer questions about hazards and protective measures, PPE, or what to do in an emergency?

- Other follow-up ideas:

  - Weekly safety meetings

  - Daily tool box talks

  - Signs and posters

  - Newsletters

  - Hands-on assessment of skills

  - On-the-spot feedback (both constructive and positive)
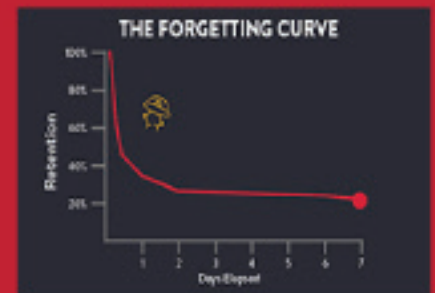
  - Retention exercises

Conclusion

Incorporating online learning into your training program is a smart way to make your training program more effective and engaging to your workers. This can lead to fewer incidents and injuries, a safer work environment, and safe and healthy employees.

SafetyNow members report reducing accident and incident rates by an average of 57% through the use of consistent and compliant safety eLearning in their safety training programs. What's more, those reduced accident and incident rates translate into a healthy reduction in liability insurance premiums as well.

Safety Training Evaluation Form

Course Title: _____

Date: _____

COURSE EXPECTATIONS	Curcle the score that best applies. 1=poor .... 4=excellent			
Rate your understanding of course objectives.	1	2	3	4
How well did the course cover the content you were expecting?	1	2	3	4
COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT				
How consistent was the course content with the objectives?	1	2	3	4
How relevant was the subject matter or course content?	1	2	3	4
Was the content arranged in a clear and logical way?	1	2	3	4
Did the content adequately explain the knowledge, skills and concepts it presented?	1	2	3	4
Did any of the activities help you gain a clearer understanding of the subject?	1	2	3	4
Did the use of case studies and scenarios help you gain a clearer understanding of the content?	1	2	3	4
Rate your enjoyment of the course.	1	2	3	4
PACE AND NAVIGATION				
Rate the pace at which the e-learning course advanced.	1	2	3	4
The direction of the course was clear.	1	2	3	4
How would you rate the ease of navigation?	1	2	3	4
MULTIMEDIA				
Amount and quality of multimedia (audio, video, and animation) used in the course.	1	2	3	4
Rate the amount and quality of images and graphics used ion the course.	1	2	3	4
Rate the amount and quality of audio track used in the course.	1	2	3	4

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RANK THE FOLLOWING BASED ON AGREEMENT: 1=Strongly Disagree... 4=Strongly Agree				
INTERACTIVITY				
This e-learning course contained opportunities for interactive learning.	1	2	3	4
The interactivity was suitable for the content.	1	2	3	4
VALUE OF THE TRAINING SESSION				
I learned a lot in this training session.	1	2	3	4
I can apply what I learned on the job.	1	2	3	4

NAME TWO THINGS YOU LEARNED IN THIS TRAINING SESSION THAT YOU CAN APPLY IN YOUR WORK:

1.

2.

ARE THERE WAYS YOU FEEL THIS TRAINING MAY BE IMPROVED:

COMPLETED BY OPTOINAL): _____

DATE COMPLETED: _____