

HOW TO CREATE WINNING ELEARNING COURSES



SHIFT
DISRUPTIVE ELEARNING

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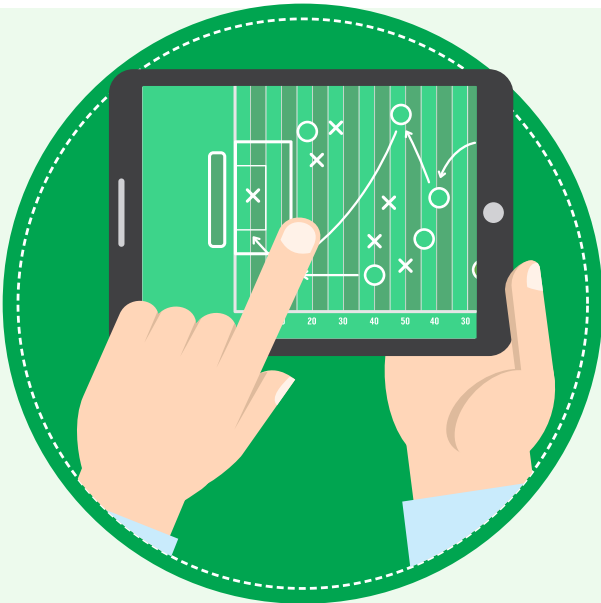
INTRODUCTION

Whether you are a training manager, learning & talent development consultant or an eLearning designer, you have seen it develop for quite some time now: Your learner profile is slowly but surely changing. You now see many more members of Generation Y in the workplace and taking your training programs. These are the Millennials or the modern learners whose temperaments, attitudes and ways of thinking are vastly different from those of their predecessors, the Baby Boomers.

Considering we are all short on time, it makes sense to maximize your efforts with a winning eLearning strategy. The best strategies: will deliver compelling and meaningful content that resonate with learners. They FASCINATE the learner from start to finish. They appeal to learners' unique personalities, distinct tastes, and learning preferences. Prepare these essential ingredients to whip your winning content today.

This eBook will help you design eLearning courses that will get your learners hooked, and make them wonder what more you have in store for them. It comes **chock-full of simple tips and ideas** on turning your content from an overwhelming mass of gray text into something that engages learners.

Develop a Winning eLearning Strategy



Even before you design, develop, test or do anything related to the project, you must define your vision, i.e., **where you want to go**. Get everything down on paper, especially your objectives and limitations for the project, and support them by establishing your target audience and defining your desired outcome for the audience early on.

These are just some of the questions you have to ask yourself when creating your eLearning strategy:

✓ Define — Purpose, Scope, and Goals of eLearning

1) What do you want to achieve with eLearning?

The questions to ask include: What will your organization accomplish with eLearning? Why is it needed? How will it help the organization or your client meet their business goals?

You must assess the need for the training you are developing and prioritize your audience's needs.

2) What are your goals?

Your eLearning must directly impact organizational goals. To do so, you must create a list of specific and measureable objectives that you want to achieve with the implementation of your eLearning course.

✓ Understand — Audience and Organizational Readiness

3) Who is your target audience, what do they want?

Understand your audience: their current knowledge, their abilities, job roles, and what needs they have for your eLearning content. Research and define the ideal target audience in terms of their expectations of eLearning, IT literacy levels, tech-savvy, grasp of mobile learning, and the training provisions you currently have.

4) What is the current technical status?

eLearning relies on availability of technology for its delivery. Hence, you must assess the IT readiness of your organization. Ask: do you have the right IT platforms? Is the technology for implementing a scalable eLearning training program available? What changes are needed in the current IT environment, and will the current eLearning courses integrate with the future changes?

✓ Realize — Stakeholders, Buy-in Process, and Limitations

5) *Who would be involved?*

The biggest problem with implementing an eLearning strategy is getting stakeholders' opinion — and these stakeholders can be varied and dispersed throughout the organization. Finding them and understanding their concerns is crucial for the buy-in process.

6) *What are the inhibitors and limiters to learning implementation?*

What are the risks associated with your strategy? Which issues can sabotage the schedule and the timeline, and perhaps the overall integrity of the eLearning strategy?

Profile the risks, individually qualify and prioritize them, and build the right answers.



✓ Plan — Access, Marketing, and Measurement

7) *How will courses be accessed?*

Your interactive elements will be designed according to the network the course will be accessed from. Will it be an LMS, mobile devices, or the company's intranet?

8) *How would you market the program?*

Marketing should be part and parcel of your rollout plan, and clearly defined in the strategy. This makes it easier to design programs so that they can easily be promoted. Your end goal is to engage the target audience, and doing that should start with the first slide or course you intend to make.

9) *How would you measure results?*

A final question to ask is, which results are important and how will they be identified and measured? Important KPIs include performance, ROI, and cost of owning the eLearning course.

How to Design Winning eLearning Courses



We've all met them. Ask about online courses they've taken, and they'll roll their eyes. Current eLearners are bored and can't wait for their courses to end. Whoever put together these courses – was it you? – They didn't have the right recipe to design winning eLearning courses.

Now that you have your strategy in place, it's time you follow these design guidelines to produce the best results:

#1 : Think Lean

Today's learner has less time and more distractions than ever before, making it unrealistic to assume that employees can sit for an hour or more to complete an e-Learning course without interruptions. They prefer to know the gist of a story from a one-line update than read pages about it. They demand that information is made accessible to them on the go. This is what's driving the shift toward just-in-time, micro-learning.

The thought is that it's better to engage a learner for 10 minutes of truly productive learning time where information is absorbed and retained, as opposed to presenting them with an hour-long course that has no impact.



There's undoubtedly a large amount of information that you need to convey to employees during training, but to trim it down, keep it manageable and maximize effectiveness, it's important to keep it short and to-the-point.

Here are 3 tips that can help you achieve this goal:

1. Say it with a Visual: If you have content that needs to be shared, but you don't want to inundate learners with an influx of text, often a visual will do the trick. Diagrams, graphics, infographics or videos can be ideal ways to condense what would be a lot of long, boring text into something that feels manageable and engaging to the learner.

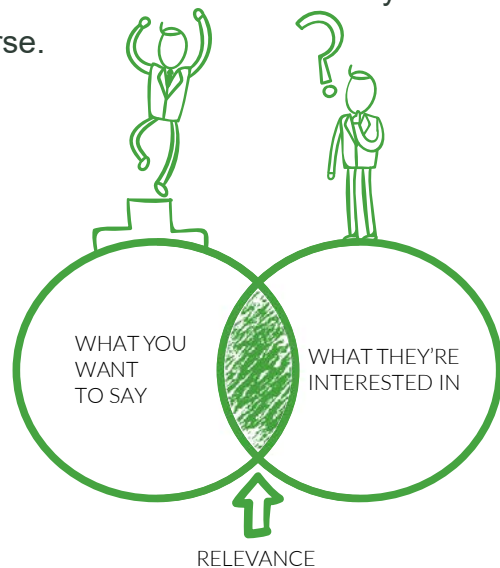
2. Deconstruct and Modularize: Forget the linear way of conveying content as you would do for eLearning courses of longer durations. Microlearning demands that you let learners choose their own path according to their needs and at their own pace and time. If you have an hour-long course, breaking it up into six 10-minute modules, or three 20-minute courses will help you keep your learner's attention and content is more likely to stick with them.

3. Avoid Repetitiveness: Let's say you've included a text- slide in your course and this same text is included in a script read by a narrator. You're not only boring your learners with repetitiveness, but you're also demonstrating the idea that they're not able to read it themselves. This is a big turnoff in eLearning courses.

#2 : Relevant Content

Always Wins

The modern learner is not only short on time but also gets easily distracted. Social media, smartphone, emails, deals on the Internet, their favorite blogs, whatever is being shown on the television—there is no lack of “attractions” vying for their attention. So you have to make your point right away; beat around the bush and your learner will leave the course.



Here's how to keep your content relevant:

- **Make it learner-centered.** Your course content should be relevant to what your target audience needs.
- **Provide plenty of examples:** Use examples to clarify concepts or theories, and make those examples relatable.
- **Keep it real:** Let learners experience an authentic setting by using realistic dialogue and fictitious yet believable characters.
- **Create clear course objectives:** For many students, knowing why they are there and how it will help them, makes the eLearning course more rewarding.
- **Make your content actionable:** Cut to the chase. Do away with the history, the background information, and the theories. Deliver the “how-to” right away. Remember, your learners are looking for just-in-time solutions.

#3 : Make the Course User-friendly

While engaging students and making sure content is fully covered are very important parts of course success, it is just as important to go through and make sure your user interface (UI) ducks are in a row. Taking the time to go through and check for user-friendliness will help ensure that your students don't lose out simply because the course is difficult to navigate.

Keep in mind that taking a course isn't often optional for most people. They are taking it because they have to and will have little patience for guesswork. Make it clear what the user needs to do in order to advance in the course. Learning is difficult enough without the added annoyance of having to hunt for what to click on.

Improve your user experience (UX) design skills with these tips:

- ***This Isn't a Novel, Don't Write it Like One.*** Keep large blocks of text to a minimum. They're hard to digest and even more difficult to stay focused on. Incorporate visual cues that will help learners follow along and know when key information is being presented.
- ***Don't Let Design Interfere with Function.*** An eLearning course is not the time to use all the crayons in your 120-color box. Sticking to a color scheme with good, contrasting colors is the first step to making sure your course looks cohesive and doesn't force your audience to give up due to eyestrain.
- ***Figure Out your Navigation so Your Users Don't Have to.*** Your users should be tested on course material, not their ability to navigate a convoluted system. The navigation of your course should seem almost too easy as if it requires no thought, because it shouldn't require any.

#4 : Content Before Bells and Whistles

While quality eLearning courses can and should include graphics, photos and charts, this is only half the battle of making them memorable. A course that is nice to look at but that doesn't engage the audience is just a pretty face without substance. However, throwing in random interactions too often or asking the audience to answer questions about less relevant information will make your course seem juvenile, as if you're just checking up on your students as opposed to truly making sure they understand key concepts.

"Don't try to dazzle with technology. It doesn't matter if you have a plethora of tools available to create courses that wow users. They will fall flat on its face if the content fails to motivate or engage them".

– Hazel Alpizar, *Innovation Manager*

Do not focus on technology at the cost of creating compelling content. Follow these tips:

- **Storyboard your eLearning course first.** This will help you include only what's necessary rather than including too many animations, interactions, or other "bells and whistles". Read this step by step guide.
- **Use a minimalist or uncluttered design approach** to give learners the bare minimum of information needed to get them "up and running" on the task to be learned.
- **Identify the most important content and cut the nonessential parts.** Research has proven that eliminating unnecessary text, audio, visuals, and pictures reduces information overload for users. Include animations and interactions only when absolutely necessary to support specific learning outcomes.

#5 : Motivate Learners All The Way Through

Your basic premise is that all learning depends on motivation. No matter what we as learning professionals do, we can't get eLearners to commit new data or information to their memories unless we motivate them first.

Winning eLearning courses are desirable and motivating by design. They offer an attractive learning environment for learners, who find it worthwhile to click next and stick to the course until they finish.

So, what is the key to motivating learners and ensuring that they stay on track throughout a course? The trick is to design the course with elements that promote motivation before, during, and even after course completion. You cannot make someone learn but you can create an environment that promotes learning.



BEFORE

Communicate expectations and goals before the course starts. By sharing with the learners what they can expect, you are already motivating the students to meet standards set forth.



DURING

Design for active participation: Create activities that encourage exploration. People learn best from experience, and the more authentic and participatory the experience, the greater the learning. Present a common problem and provide the resources for the learners to create their own solutions. Taking control of the learning process provides self-motivation and deeper engagement in the content.



AFTER

Celebrate course accomplishments: people remain motivated when they are aware of their accomplishments. For instance, provide a certificate or a prize when the student completes the course.



#6 : Go Responsive

Modern learners love to have things go their way. They want to be able to control the pace of their learning and decide when and where they can take your course. So don't create courses that tether them to the desk or make them reschedule their already-overflowing calendar. Create courses that they can take on the go.

Make the most of available technology to reach out to your learners in the way they prefer. Go responsive to make learning accessible.

- ✓ Design device-independent courses. As more and more companies go the BYOD way, it is foolish to restrict your courses to specific devices. Do not make your learner hunt around for “approved” devices; they will probably choose not to take your course!
- ✓ Choose LMSs that accommodate responsive design.
- ✓ Design in bite-sized chunks that the learners can gobble up as they wait at the doctor's office or during their lunch break.



**READ MORE ABOUT RESPONSIVE
ELEARNING DESIGN IN THIS EBOOK**



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