

Off-the-Shelf Content

How to make it interesting and impactful

By Vishal Shah

When you do not have access to an expert in an area where your team needs further development, turning to a content library can be a quick and effective choice. However, more often than not, off-the-shelf content libraries turn out to be a great way to lose engagement with your learners.

You're looking for something that people will enjoy and find value in, while the HR team establishes a learning culture. That's where we get to the promise and the curse of off-the-shelf courseware.

The promise is that you're bringing to your organization a complete library of just about everything they need — at their fingertips, easy to access, and on low price that offers everyone an incredible development opportunity.

The curse is that the courses in a library are relatively generic. There are a lot of courses out there about, say, 'effective business writing'. None of them includes your organization's policies and procedures around the appropriate use of your branding.

While off-the-shelf content can help you fill skill gaps in your organization, it is imperative that learning and development teams create meaningful learning experiences that build on current knowledge to directly impact performance.

So how do you make off-the-shelf content engaging and impactful for your learners?

One of the simplest ways is to add your own lessons right into it.

Don't reinvent the wheel, what's already working to engage your learners?

Executive Support: At many organizations, executive directives highlight the importance of a specific initiative. A short introductory video to the topic and value to be realized by the business from a company leader can help motivate your team to engage in the content.

Paper in an e-World: Linking generic courses with a specific form or template to be used at your organization can help tie larger course concepts directly back to their application at your company. Printouts, links to files on a network, or downloadable PDFs are an easy add-on to an existing course.

Peer Pressure: Ask employees to share stories around the topic at hand. You can record these to include as a supplement to the course, or hold a live event before launching the course.

Assess for Success: Add your own questions to post-course quizzes or include a written or verbal challenge for learners to complete. Putting new knowledge to use through role-playing is quick way to determine if your team is able to apply training to work.

At the end of the day, people want access to the skills they need to do their jobs well. Off-the-shelf content should connect your team to the most current thinking in the business world and get learners interacting with new concepts and applying them to their real jobs as soon as possible. With considerably less time than creating courses from scratch, you can easily customize off-the-shelf training content to better engage your organization. **TEL**



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