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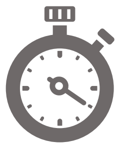
Insight Guide

E-Learning Compliance

Insight Guide Overview



20 minutes

- The challenges of compliance training
- Questions to ask before you begin your design
- A new generation of design tips for compliance e-learning

The Challenges With Compliance Training

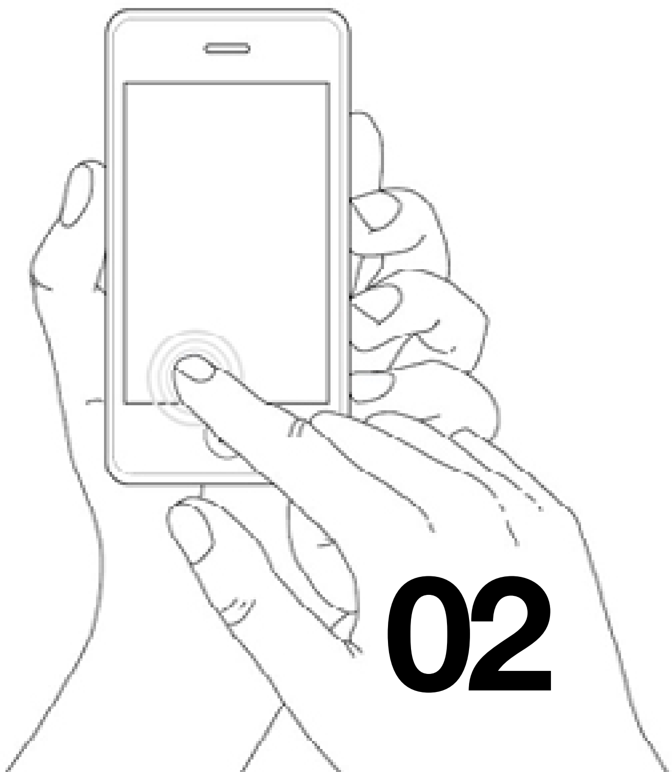
Is your compliance training connecting with employees? Is your content relevant and engaging? Are you having the impact you need and the results you're seeking? Compliance training. You can travel a long way around your organization before you find a phrase that causes more people to give you a look of complete confusion.

Why is that? For most organizations compliance training has an unusual set of properties that you don't find with other types of training: everyone has to do it and no one wants to do it. It may not ever be loved by people, but there's a lot you can do to make sure it's not painful, and actually does what it's supposed to – reduce risk.

So What's the Issue?

People aren't approaching compliance positively because they don't understand it. When you don't understand something it can become confusing, aggravating, and time consuming. We've all been there before. And essentially it feels like a waste of time.

These days, employees are suffering from learning fatigue. According to LRN's 2011-12 Ethics & Compliance Leadership Survey Report, 59% of respondents identify "Online Education Fatigue" as their top challenge. That's a lot of sleeping learners! Either that or they're busy multi-tasking: writing an e-mail, talking on the phone, and checking Facebook all at the same time. Sound familiar? We have a lot of competition for learner's attention these days.



However, compliance training still has to get done and there must be a good reason to do it. Let's face it; there wouldn't be thousands of hours of e-learning on compliance topics if there weren't good reasons.

One of the main reasons that organizations develop training is to meet Compliance Regulations. Sometimes, people really do need to tick off a box. Compliance training is essential and seldom done effectively by more traditional methods, especially if you have to hit the entire population at once by a critical date.

So, e-learning is an essential part of the solution. What can we do to make it better? In this short guide we will discuss how to make compliance e-learning more palatable, exciting, and memorable through the following effective design tips and techniques.

Before You Build Your Design

In order for you stay on message it is important to sit with whoever is in charge of compliance/risk reduction and discuss their intentions for the compliance training program. This will allow you to measure your results, produce an appropriate plan, formulate Q and A, and will ultimately drive the design of your compliance e-learning module. To make the creation process easy and error free ask them these questions:

- What is the risk?
- Why is this important now? What's changed from how we were doing things yesterday?
- Are we already beyond risk and in trouble? What can we do about that (which may have nothing to do with training – but that shouldn't stop you from trying to help)
- What are the consequences? How likely are they? What will they cost us? What will be the consequences for everyone concerned?
- What happens if we do nothing (compared to the cost of the potential consequences)?
- Who needs to do something differently? What exactly do they need to do differently, stop doing or start doing?
- What are the mistakes that we're making that we don't realize? Why are they mistakes?
- How will we know we've reduced the risk? (Again, not something that a training intervention could hope to answer on its own, but you need to be part of the solution)
- Who should people talk to if they're not clear about what to do?

You and your internal customers should be in complete agreement to the answers to all of these questions. Complete them before you ever talk about how the training will work.

Quick Tip: If you can get the answers to these questions, you've got every chance of following through with a solution that addresses the intent. As leaders in the industry, our advice is not to move on until you have the answers to these questions.

A New Design Approach For Compliance

Design tips for compliance e-learning

Whether we're taking an e-learning or a more multi-channel approach to compliance training, there are design ideas that we like to include. We may not be able to include every tip in every design, but if you can throw in a few good ideas you might just have a hit on your hands.

Additionally, by this time in the stage you and your internal customer should be very clear on the core intentions; your design approach should flow from there.

Below you will find we used e-learning examples, but the principles apply to all aspects of compliance training.

1. Make it fun

Don't make the mistake of dressing up your compliance e-learning with mind-numbing intros. Your e-learning training should be sharp, short, and memorable. Incorporating graphics, and making the content enticing makes the training a lot easier to sit through.

With creativity learning can be fun. A plain screen with questions is boring and not amusing. Learners want to be incorporated into the story to keep themselves engaged. Putting the learner into the story adds an interactive component, allowing the material to be retained easier.

Some of the approaches you can take include a graphic novel approach, a comic book layout; add in areas for the learner to be a part of the story. The more engaging and fun it is the better chance the learner will come away from the training with more knowledge and a better understanding of compliance.

There are many different approaches to make your e-learning more interesting, exciting and fun to engage the learner.

2. Keep it simple

Structure your compliance course around your key message. Keep in mind your intention that you made before you created the e-learning course so you stay on track.

Cut it up. Don't make it too lengthy because learners can get distracted and run over the content without being engaged. If you stay short, sharp, and memorable you will be right on target.

Another aspect is keeping the content easily viewable. Don't make things too complicated so the learner gets confused. Get rid of all the jargon and stay on message throughout the course.

3. Make it memorable

Much compliance e-learning is mandatory for either whole organizations or large subsections of it. Unfortunately, most of the design approaches that companies take with their e-learning are completely unmemorable. Learners come away remembering the yawning and not the content.

Every screen, every point, every word should have to justify its existence. To create something the learner will remember put yourself in his/her shoes. Think about what is easier to remember; reading a question and marking the right answer, or being fully engaged while watching a story unfold in front of your eyes and picking the right decision. I bet you chose the second option.

It is easy to lose sight of this when designing your training. Organize your training by keeping your message to three or four main points to give learners a chance to remember your message.

Quick Tip: Make your training sharp, short, and memorable to create an effective e-learning guide on compliance.

4. Show consequences

What would happen if you took a risk and skipped a critical step in a process? Could you get away with it? What would happen? Would the company be fined? Could you lose your job?

All risks have consequences and creating a course that capitalizes on those mistakes makes the content stickier and more memorable.

Be sure to make the consequences relevant. As soon as someone is forced to look at something and can legitimately say, "I would never be in this situation," you've lost credibility and you've wasted their time. Create your course in ways that have distinct consequences for different job types. Create a visceral environment that plays on the learner's emotions. Get the learner to successfully understand the material and appropriately comprehend the consequences of not knowing. This also keeps the learner engaged; making it more memorable, which is the main goal.

5. Create practical stories

Decide on a narrative. Create stories that are engaging and entertaining. The stories should incorporate situations that the learner might face on the job in real life. Here's a quick tip to help you decide on a narrative:

The best way to show how risks and consequences can play out is through example. There's a natural narrative to showing how doing/not doing something exposes a company to a risk as well as the fallout and consequences for the company and the individual. Stories following this type of narrative embed in the memory far better than a presentation of straight facts. Make the best use of that narrative by creating simple storylines for your module.

Quick Tip: Keeping it simple works best; there is no need for audio or visual here.

Here's a slightly impertinent example from a module on mandatory vacation policies:

Always consider your audience when creating your story. For the vacation policy program to the right, being a little provocative worked for the audience. It might not work for yours—test out different approaches with target audience members to get the tone right.

If you can source stories from your organization, then great, but we advise against using real names. Taking risks like indicating "this happened last week" is about as far as you can and should go on a personal level when referring to organization examples.

If you don't have examples from your organization, it should not be difficult to construct these stories, either from profiled cases in the public domain, or through scripting simple narratives will work just as well.

To be effective your stories should be "chewed"—contextual, realistic, unusual, concrete, human, easily accepted and discovery-oriented—into impressionable and assimilative learning.

The top three narratives in compliance e-learning take these formats:

1. Self-contained case studies:

A one or two screen exposition that typically follows the flow of:

- Context: this person was in this situation
- Action: they did / didn't do X
- Consequences: impact on the firm, the customer, and them
- Reflection: what they should have done to reduce the risk and avoid the consequences

These can work well for overall context setting and to emphasize key points of risk throughout a module. The screen shown earlier is a truncated version of this.

2. Episodic case study:

Where a module has a more involved set of steps, you could construct a case study that learners return to as the module progresses. For example, if there's a three step process for compliance, you could have case studies in the context of each process, updating the story with each step in the process.

3. Expert story:

Get your SME involved by sharing their stories and experiences. You could record these and use audio and video - the cost is nothing like what it once was for either option and it lends tone and credibility to the experience.

You don't need to have endless numbers of anecdotes – focus on the key risks that you're trying to communicate and ensure that the stories are tightly constructed and support your overall intention.

Scenarios within your story:

Your stories should incorporate scenarios that are different and create meaningful practice opportunities with short focused scenarios that let people practice just that.

Scenarios follow the flow of either the self-contained or episodic case study, but involve decision making by the learner. They're also a vital tool in a meaningful assessment.

The basic flow of the scenario is:

- Set a goal: You're working with a team on a project that could have some risk.
- Give background information: Here's what's happened so far – use descriptions of the actions of each team member, or provide real documents and show the workflow.
- Decision point: These could be either advice-based, "What would you do/ what would you advise this person to do at this point" or reflective, "What went wrong here, what step should have been taken that wasn't?" Putting the user into the situation and asking them to advise or diagnose is a powerful means of engaging and embedding the key points about risk reduction.
- Play out the consequence: Show what the result of your advice would be, positive or negative. Could it have led to a risk becoming a reality? Show what could have happened, in a safe environment.
- Coaching and feedback: Explain how the mistake could have been avoided and what a better course of decision making should have been. Where relevant, direct the learner to supporting information that gives more context.

Quick Tip: Scenarios don't have to be media driven to be immersive – they just need to be based on plausible situations and be well-constructed to make the decision points sufficiently challenging. All the effort is in the scripting. Make sure the e-learning stands up to scrutiny, and push your SMEs hard to help create plausible, challenging scenarios and questions. Take a look at the example below:

In the example below a learner is taken through a short scenario and then presented with decision points.

6. Make the learner's role clear

The most important aspect of any compliance e-learning is proving that people actually know what to do after they finish.

The learner needs to know his/her role in the company and what their effect is. Develop your course in a manner that allows the learner to understand their role in reducing risk for the company.

Be sure to make what needs to be done very explicit, not just in the policy. The learner should understand his/her responsibility and take into consideration what needs to be done to reduce risk.

The learner's role can't be about simple recall of facts that will flake away from short term memory within minutes. It must involve putting those facts into practice.

Quick Tip: Assessment is going to be the backbone of your compliance approach. More than anything, you want people to be able to show they get it. Design an assessment that you and your internal customers agree is tough enough; meaning you really need to know what to do and how to do it. Then give people complete control over when they do that assessment. You don't want to force people through some screen by screen, locked down piece of learning. Make it relevant, sharp, interactive and new.

What can e-learning bring to compliance training?

E-learning can deliver exceptional results if you have a good reason to push beyond communication and want to do something with more involvement. E-learning will enable you to achieve the effect of all of the one-way communications methods set out above, but it can do much more.

- It can convey key messages with pacing and tone, if well designed it can break down a complex set of risks and build up a clear picture point by point.
- It brings consistency where a webinar or cascaded model of delivery may not.
- It can bring more engagement than a passive document or a one-way video or audio piece through a combination of different interactions and uses of media.
- It can introduce challenge through well structured, searching questions that require intelligent response.
- It can be personalized by giving users some choice and possibly some recommended pathways through the content depending on who they are and what they need to know.
- Most importantly in a compliance context: It can give you proof. Dissemination of documents, audio overviews are good at giving context, but they're one way traffic. Assessment (and tracking of e-learning via an LMS) simply proves that people have done something. Yes it's true; you cannot force people to learn. But you can design an assessment that challenges people and gives a more firm indicator on whether people actually know what to do (we'll have more on that later). You can call that a "cover and backside" strategy. But when the regulatory authorities come knocking to see how effectively you've reduced risk, you know that is what they will look for.
- E-learning doesn't have to be the "high-end" option either. With more rapid tools like Articulate currently being used in organizations, creating a short focused e-learning course does not have to break your budget and can be a lot cheaper than the one's mentioned above.

Talk to us...

Find out how we can help you with compliance e-learning design, and lots more:

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