



How to Improve Learner Engagement

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 **Adobe Captivate Prime**
Learning Management System

 **THE ELEARNING
GUILD**

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INTRODUCTION

We hear a lot today about the importance of learner engagement. *It makes training more effective and fun. It has a positive impact on workplace behavior. Engaged learners are more loyal because they believe their organizations care about their growth and development.*

The statements above may all be true, but perhaps the most important reason organizations today are focused on learner engagement has to do with the bottom line. Responsible organizations pay close attention to budget and resource allocation. A great deal of time, effort, and money is invested in creating and distributing content to employees. Companies that invest in learning want to see a return on that investment.

Some might argue that the primary concern firms have around training today is mitigating risk and liability. However, even companies that lean more toward a "check the box" approach to training are waking up to the importance of learner engagement. They see the value that competent, well-trained employees bring to the organization, and they are recognizing that improving learner engagement can pave the way to real business results.

How to improve learner engagement

Organizations interested in improving learner engagement can take a number of different approaches. One is to take a fresh look at their learning management systems in order to leverage them in a new way. The LMS can help make learning more engaging through:

- The content consumption experience
- Gamification
- Discussion boards/social learning
- Personalization
- Recommendations

This paper will examine each of these topics in greater detail.

The content consumption experience

We live in a fast-paced world. Good learning content will educate and inspire employees, but first it must capture their attention. To attract and retain attention, content must be engaging, concise, and easy to access.

There is a big push today toward microlearning, where learners consume small bites of information at a time. There is scientific theory behind this trend. Researchers maintain that spaced repetition of learning material deepens and reinforces the coding of information in the part of the brain associated with the ability to remember.

Microlearning has impacted the delivery of training. In the past, training was usually a full-day affair facilitated by an instructor in a classroom setting. Although that model still exists, a radical shift has occurred. An increasing number of today's workers are self-consuming mini training modules at their desks, in the company break room, or on the factory floor. On-the-go employees are using mobile devices to learn while in elevators, trains, or airport terminals.

Employees today also have decided learning preferences. While some are still fans of traditional written material, others prefer to learn from podcasts or videos. Firms are discovering that in order to appeal to a diverse staff of learners, the same content must be readily available in a variety of formats and mediums. L&D professionals must be able to instantly deliver this content, making sure it is compatible with whatever device(s) employees might use.

Finally, regardless of how content is delivered, the user experience must be positive in order for employees to engage with it. For this reason, L&D professionals are considering the overall content consumption experience. A seamless user experience is the goal. This means high-quality video streaming and a delivery mechanism that serves content with minimum latency.

Eight tips to make content more engaging

Instructional developers, designers, and trainers can do a lot to make and deliver more engaging content. Here are some ideas:

1. Create the content so it can be delivered in multiple formats, to appeal to different types of learners.
2. Capitalize on your learners' barriers for taking training. If learners have long work commutes, for example, develop podcasts for them to fill the dead time.
3. Foster connections. During instructor-led training (ILT), use icebreakers to establish trust with the facilitator, dismantle barriers between participants, and connect learners to one another.
4. With live virtual learning, set the tone for interactivity by engaging participants as soon as they log in. Have them respond to a poll question or introduce themselves via the chat function. Every four minutes or so, include an activity that forces participants to engage with the facilitator, other participants, and/or the virtual classroom tools.
5. Focus on small group or partner work, which encourages learners to share knowledge, expertise, and perspectives.
6. Engage all the senses. To create a memorable learner experience, consider the impact of music, snacks, or even aromatherapy.
7. In order to be truly engaging, make sure that content is accurate and realistic. Use real-life scenarios to clarify learning concepts and provide opportunity for immediate application.
8. Let learners lead. Structure training so that they think they have come up with the answers themselves. This will help them process and retain the information in a more meaningful way.

It means a unified playback experience for video, regardless of device. And it means smooth downloads of PDF, PPT, and DOCX files, and xAPI-, SCORM-, and AICC-compliant packages, without the need for additional plug-ins.

L&D leaders would agree that delivering effective training in 2017 has become complicated! The good news is that a robust learning management system can ease the process. Learning content that can be stored in an LMS and can be retrieved by employees anywhere and anytime includes:

- SCORM learning modules
- Video clips
- Animation
- Images and infographics
- Interactive content such as polls
- Third-party eLearning content

Gamification

Gamification is often touted as an effective tool to improve learner engagement. When applied wisely, it can certainly be a powerful motivator; however, it should not be adopted simply because it is a fun diversion.

When gamifying training, make sure that the purpose aligns with business objectives. For example: If the corporate goal is to increase speed and minimize errors made by data entry personnel, gamification might be a very viable solution. Employees could compete in timed data entry contests, with a leaderboard tracking scores for the fastest entries and/or the fewest errors. If, however, the corporate goal is to improve the customer service of call center agents, shortening the length of the call would be misguided. In that case, it would be better to focus gamification efforts on the demonstration of good listening skills.

A growing body of research suggests that gamification elements such as leaderboards and digital badges keep learners motivated and engaged. Use these mechanics to recognize and reward learners who complete specific learning milestones or demonstrate desirable workplace qualities.

A best practice for firms introducing gamification is to wrap learning within a game that sparks an emotional reaction in the learner and offers a concrete measure of growth. Other recommendations include clearly articulating expectations and providing direct feedback for actions and results.

Gamification may not be appropriate for every workplace; however, even organizations not interested in it can incorporate some game mechanics into the mix. One enterprise introduced an initiative where it offered a week-long set of ILT modules in the evening, coupled with socializing and a happy hour. For every session attended, employees received a raffle ticket. Prizes were valued at \$100 – \$500 each. While not an example of gamification per se, the successful project was a fresh way for the company to deliver content, and it ignited excitement about learning among staff.

Discussion boards/social learning

Humans are inherently social creatures who yearn to connect and be part of a community. Smart learning leaders take advantage of this natural tendency. They welcome opportunities and provide platforms for collaborative learning, teaching, and sharing. As one L&D leader notes, "We all have something to learn and something to teach. Social learning allows us to share what we know and learn from others."

One of the best ways to drive learner engagement is to get employees talking. Foster a healthy degree of interaction by introducing discussion boards and supporting social learning. Encourage friendly competition by enabling gamification and issuing virtual badges that employees can earn and then proudly display on company social media channels.

Discussion boards and other social tools can be successfully deployed both in organizations where employees are united in one location, and those in which they are scattered across the globe. Although social tools may seem unnecessary when workers are together under one roof, consider this scenario: Communication may be strong when the office colleagues initially attend training, but it peters out over time after the session concludes. In such situations, discussion boards and group forums help participants retain the bonds they formed. When the workforce is global, the need to bring workers together is even more crucial. Social tools can be leveraged to create vital virtual communities.

L&D leaders become disillusioned when they launch a virtual community but the project fizzles due to lackluster participation. It should be noted that building a vibrant virtual community takes some time and commitment. Experts point out that in order to maintain a high level of engagement, virtual communities must: be easy for employees to access; target people with similar interests; regularly add relevant, useful content; and have a knowledgeable moderator willing to initiate meaningful discussions.

Below, experts add some additional thoughts on discussion boards and social learning.

- Discussion boards can be effective tools for onboarding new hires, serving as a place for them to post questions and receive quick answers.
- Information on discussion boards must be searchable. The board should be a first stop for an employee trying to solve a problem. If the worker does not easily find what he or she is seeking, he or she will cease using it.
- Social learning can backfire if the information shared is inaccurate.
- When launching a social learning initiative, solicit several key influencers to spark interest and create excitement. Awarding inexpensive prizes to advocates and early adopters can keep the momentum going.
- Although they are designed for idea exchange, it can be challenging for remote learners to connect on webinars and at online virtual training events. Combat the isolation some workers feel by building a social experience into the program. Facilitate engagement by encouraging networking and pairing learners together in smaller subgroups for activities.

Personalization

Personalization is a modern-day craze. Within a learning context, personalization means providing employees with “just-for-me” experiences. It behooves companies today to enable personalization because it contributes to learner engagement.

Here are some ways L&D can use an LMS to enable personalization in the workplace.

- Personalized dashboards allow learners to get a complete picture of where they are and where they are headed. When logging in to the LMS, viewers get a screen that they can customize with drag-and-drop widgets. On that screen they can view completed, pending, and recommended courses; competencies they have attained; badges they have received; and details of activities to earn more badges and points.
- The dashboard may also feature a leaderboard where learners can check their gamification scores and compare their performance to that of their peers.
- Learners can personalize the way their learning courses are delivered. They can choose the learning style they most resonate with (eLearning, instructor-led training, or virtual classroom), and they can change the language to one of the many supported by the system.
- Learners can flag content personally pertinent to them with bookmarks, so they can revisit it again at a later date.
- A personalized calendar can alert the learner when a compliance requirement or an important assignment must be completed by a certain date.

Recommendations

Career growth is very important to many workers. However, relatively few learners take the initiative to parse what is usually an extensive database of potential courses available to them on the corporate LMS. Those who elect to do so are often overwhelmed or confused when it comes to selecting material that would be most beneficial to their careers.

An LMS can lay the groundwork to help employees accelerate their careers by providing prescriptive feedback and recommendations. It can curate a personalized curriculum of suggested courses, based on the learner’s current skills and the qualifications required to take the next step toward a job they aspire to. Personalized learning paths can be adjusted or modified according to business needs or industry trends.

Personalized recommendations can do wonders for boosting learner engagement. Employees perceive that the organization is interested and invested in their future growth, and this fosters loyalty and commitment to the organization.

CONCLUSION

Organizations today are striving to remain competitive in a tight labor market. Creating opportunities for employee engagement is one way to stand out. There are many ways companies can support and drive employee engagement, and the learning management system can be a valuable partner in the process.

Adobe's LMS solution, Captivate Prime, makes learning more engaging through the content consumption experience, gamification, discussion boards/social learning, personalization, and recommendations. [Click here](#) to learn more about Adobe Captivate Prime.

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