11 mistakes not to be committed in eLearning training

A list of the 11 things that an online trainer should not do.

Clark Quinn, an eLearning professional and winner of "eLearning Guild's Guild Master award - 2012 edition" has finalized a list of indications that trainers who use eLearning should avoid.

1. Don't stop with courses.

Don't use courses as the only tool in your tool box. There are other causes of performance problems in organizations besides skill gaps.

2. Don't equate information with ability.

One of the wrong ways to do courses is to get information from SMEs and present it to the learners (whether or not you add a knowledge test). The notion that information equals ability is wrong. Similarly, recognizing the right abstract concept from a list isn't going to lead to a new ability. In short, learning is about doing in practice what you'll be doing in performance, with support.

3. Don't think smile sheets are evaluation.

Too often, learning is evaluated by asking the learner whether they liked the experience, or thought it was valuable. For the average learner, the correlation between their evaluation of the learning experience and the real impact is essentially zero. Instead, we should be looking to see if they're retaining the learning and applying it in performance. And if it's actually changing the outcome from what was unacceptable to an acceptable level.

4. Don't think it all has to be in the head.

it's better to put knowledge in the world. Tools like checklists, lookup tables, decision trees, how-to videos, procedure guides, and more all address gaps in our cognitive architecture. We're really bad at remembering rote and arbitrary information. Further, in situations where the amount of data is large, it must be exact, or it's changing fast, it's almost impossible to have people remember it.

5. Don't think you need to control learning.

Too often, L&D believes it has to own all the organizational learning. it then becomes useful to think what L&D can do. And we start looking at a shift from provider to facilitator. Helping people learn to learn, in addition to doing courses right when the information or skill absolutely, positively has to be in the head.

6. Don't do yearly, quarterly, etc reviews.

The evidence is in that annual performance reviews do more harm than good. They've become rituals of organizational performance that has bred rote processes and meaningless feedback. Worse, they incite fear and loathing. What really helps people is much more regular feedback. And, by making it more informal, there's less anxiety about it. Coaching is an excellent model to think about for guiding performance.

7. Don't hide your work.

Another habit common to organizations is for work to be individual, and decisions are made behind closed doors. Yet the sharing of work is a step towards creating an organization where communication facilitates execution and innovation. On principle, if you're working and learning 'out loud', people can give you good tips, learn from it, and be aligned with it. When decisions are transparent, people can understand why it was made (and if they're to be shared, they're likely to be better).

8. Don't penalize sensible mistakes.

When done right, showing your work also creates 'safety', in that mistakes are visible but they're used as lessons and not as shaming. Instead, you want to celebrate, not the mistake, but the lesson learned. That has two benefits: people learn it's safe to experiment (smartly), and no one needs to make the same mistake. Innovation requires experimentation, and experimentation implies mistakes.

9. Don't say "that's not how it's done here", and don't look for people like you.

Related to mistakes, two important additional components of innovation are being open to new ideas, and valuing diversity. If you keep doing things the old way, you minimize the chance of finding new and better ways. You should evaluate all serious inputs and ideas, because in one of them might be the seed of the future.

10. Don't expect different than you demonstrate.

Importantly, if you say 'learn out loud', and don't do the same, no one will take you seriously. You should practice what you preach. I suggest that L&D should be leading the way by beginning to work in the new and innovative ways, and then scale it out.

11. Don't forget the network.

When people are working well together, the outcome is better. There will be (many) times when it makes more sense to help folks learn to find the answer rather than provide it yourself. Your resources are limited, be smart about when, and how, to employ them.

Article taken from eLearningLearning.