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How to use xAPI to make training more effective?

What is xAPI and how can it be useful? Examples of use of xAPI that are very useful in corporate training.

What is xAPI?

"The aim of the xAPI is to memorize and provide access to learning experiences. xAPI allows the monitoring of learning experiences including the traditional tracking, such as the score or the completion level of a learning object, but also allows to track the actions of learners, such as reading an article or watching a video training.
xAPI is designed to support the use cases that are typical of SCORM, as well as to allow use cases that are difficult to meet with SCORM, such as mobile training and tracking of activities performed on content accessed outside of a web browser ".

The Experience API (xAPI or Tin-Can) allows registration, monitoring, personalization and improvement of online and offline learning activities. When you employ it in training programs, you get very detailed insights into how people interact with blended learning experiences. Furthermore, it can be used to measure the effectiveness of learning, creating direct links between people's learning experiences and their performance on the workplace.

xAPI vs SCORM: the evolution of eLearning training

xAPI better reflects modern learning experiences. But how can the xAPI standard overcome the limits of SCORM and satisfy new needs?
First of all, with the xAPI standard the eLearning content does not interact directly with the LMS platform but with an intermediate level called LRS (Learning Record Store). This allows you to enjoy the contents even with a non-persistent connection and have a complete and updated tracking when the connection to the platform is re-established.
The Learning Record Store can be implemented within an LMS platform but it can also be a separate and self-consistent application installed on a machine or used on a web platform (as a web-based service), to guarantee a real interoperability of the data.

"Only a small part of learning can be monitored by SCORM in the LMS." xAPI offers the tools for a better understanding of learning: it can potentially tell us what are the best ways to convey effective learning in the workplace (via mobile apps? through coaching?). " Says James Parry, Learning Solutions Architect

xAPI offers richer insights

Thanks to its structure, the xAPI standard is useful for implementing and supporting emerging technologies, such as augmented reality, or for introducing into training systems innovative components related to informal learning. The implication? Greater attention to knowledge centred on the learner or on groups of learners (not just on the contents).

Examples in corporate training environment

Example 1: mandatory course

An online course on workplace safety / compliance is provided.
Through the SCORM tracking we can know that the user has completed the course and that he/she has obtained an 80% score in the final test.
With the integration of the xAPI standard, we can also trace "qualitative" data about his/her learning experience, for example:

- The user has posted 5 questions in the forum (if the course also has an active forum);

- The user has fully consulted the in-depth video (if an optional consultation environment for in-depth material is provided in the course);
- The user has posted a blog (if there is a social learning environment connected to the course).

Example 2: integration of training data to health KPIs concerning the rescue of human lives

When it comes to "responding" to a heart attack, the timing of the intervention is really vital. MedStar Health (https://www.watershedlrs.com/medstar-health), a health services provider in the Washington D.C region, has created a mixed learning program to help resuscitation teams reduce intervention time.
The program included LMS learning, in-person simulations and the use of a defibrillator training app. Data on response times and clinical outcomes were maintained in another system.

Thanks to xAPI all these data have been aggregated in their LRS:

- information on completing the course;
- usage data from the training app;
- simulation observation data;
- clinical results.

This way, they are able to answer the question "Does good performance during simulations lead to good performance in real clinical cases?" and identify the crucial points of training to be to save lives.

Example 3: custom training to improve sales performance

When you decide to develop a sales training program, you will probably be faced with questions like: "what makes some sellers perform better than others"? and "how to train others to give similar results?"

Using xAPI you can integrate:

- performance data from your CRM;
- involvement with training and scenario-based assessments;
- data from sessions of listening to calls and from coaching.

Separately, these data are not significant enough, but together they can help identify specific training needs and personalize experiences based on sales performance. For example, you could activate a training process for a representative who loses a specific number of sales in a row.

Example 4: use of feedback to improve training experiences

Recording the feedback of the students can provide useful insights. With xAPI you can get even more information. For example, in a learning program designed to maximize customer service outcomes you can create an open-question final survey to evaluate the usefulness of used the resources and get suggestions on how they could be improved.

Using xAPI, you can enter in your LRS the open answers you have obtained and:

- use artificial intelligence to qualitatively analyse responses and identify training trends;
- check whether the use of performance support resources improves the customer feedback scores (which you could also include in your LRS as xAPI instructions).

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