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Personal anecdotes in eLearning: the main mistakes to avoid

Well-structured and compelling stories can be a powerful tool within an eLearning course. In addition to maintaining high student concentration, they can help you discover practical cases and improve problem-solving skills.

One of the problems that eLearning is constantly facing is the possibility that the online course turns into an impersonal journey. For this reason, one of the most effective ways to remedy this problem on the part of teachers is to create an emotional connection with students through so-called "storytelling", perhaps with the introduction of personal anecdotes.

However, when it comes to personal experience, it is easy to let go, for example, to details that are too sentimental or that may make students feel uncomfortable. Precisely for this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to a series of errors when telling personal anecdotes during an online course. Only in this way can this resource be transformed into a winning weapon.

1. Get too personal

Personal anecdotes work because they allow you to exit temporarily from an "aseptic" environment made up of notions and theory. These stories can have incredible strength to set a concept or provide practical teaching. In spite of this, care must be taken not to fall into too personal details, or it will risk making the listeners feel uncomfortable or sad, if they are referring, for example, to painful details.

2. Be offensive

Irony can be a double-edged sword. When a story is told, especially if personal, the humorous touches are always welcome if executed with skill. Despite this, due to the personal tone, irony and jokes can make us find ourselves walking on a razor's edge, risking to easily offend some students or make them feel embarrassed.

3. Do not use the "correct" tone

Regardless of the form in which the anecdote is transmitted, written or oral, it is necessary that the students immediately understand that it is a small parenthesis within an explanation. Precisely for this reason, although we must not fall into sentimentality, it is preferable that we seek a deeper connection with the students, perhaps using a slightly different tone that is able to expose something personal and at the same time useful for training.

4. Tell anecdotes for themselves

Personal history undoubtedly has the objective of tempering a too formal climate and making the students relax. Nevertheless, the main purpose is, without a doubt, to provide a further educational tool. It is not, therefore, a question of "bar talk", but simply a more surprising and above all practical way of teaching something tangible to the students.

5. To stretch too much

One of the main problems when telling an anecdote, whatever it is, is to get lost and to lengthen the time of the story too much. For this reason, one must avoid telling too much background information and try to reach the heart of the story relatively quickly. In the case of a textual content, it may be useful to add images and / or videos that can help summarize the story or keep the concentration of the students high.