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How to demonstrate the effectiveness of an online course

In addition to the metrics of an online course, there are several ways to see if the course has met its training objectives, putting the beneficiaries at the center.

The statistics of an **LMS, learning management system** offer the formative details about each learner and are crucial to understand if an online training course has been effective. Completion rate, dropout rate of a course, type of content viewed, passing a quiz are all useful, but they don't answer a very important question for the long-term success of an online course: are learners satisfied with the course?

An analysis of this kind helps to understand not only whether students have taken the mandatory or optional training or acquired that knowledge, but also whether they are able to apply the knowledge they learned because it was able to meet their actual training needs. Here are some tips for understanding how effective an online course is by starting with the beneficiaries and taking inspiration from **Donald Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model**.

1. Ask for feedback through an LMS

Your LMS can function as a tool for **measuring the effectiveness of an online course**, not only with the timely reports it can offer on each user, but also with the ability to conduct surveys. Students can answer questions to assess whether the course was effective, whether it met their training needs, whether they would recommend it.
Leaving open-ended responses, depending on how large the group of students is, can also provide suggestions for improving specific aspects of the course. At the same time, students can indicate what they enjoyed most about the course. In Kirkpatrick's model, student reaction is assessed at this stage.

2. Organize training events

The exchange of impressions by students can take place in a virtual or physical classroom with the presence of a facilitator. This event can also serve as a **final evaluation** for the trainer himself. In effect, students divided into groups can return an assigned task. In this way, the trainer can evaluate the application of the skills learned during the training and simultaneously get feedback on the course from the students.
If participation in the event is not mandatory, but optional, the number of students enrolled in the event, compared to the total number of students who took the course, can already be an indicator to assess the degree of involvement and indirectly, satisfaction with the course. In Kirkpatrick's model, the second level consists of assessing the skills acquired also on the basis of student participation.

3. Measuring competencies with quizzes

A skills assessment quiz before starting an online course could be the element not only to understand the starting point, but also to demonstrate, with a final quiz, the progress made by users. To get from the beneficiaries' point of view, it would be useful to organize the assessment in an interactive way: a simulation to talk about safety at work, before and after the relevant course, helps the beneficiaries themselves to correct their mistakes, putting into practice what they have learned.
The simulation allows them to assess their ability to change their behavior as a result of the training. This is the third level of evaluation in **Kirkpatrick's model**.

4. Promote user-generated content

The last element of Kirkpatrick's rating scale measures the **results of training** directly in the workplace, putting what has been learned into practice in real life. Since the trainer can't assess performance on the job, he or she can prompt course beneficiaries to share material with newly learned skills, also reviewed based on their real-life application. This **user-generated content** can

be used in training courses for learners who have yet to take that course.
Putting course beneficiaries at the center of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of an online course means gathering their perspective and engaging them, prompting them to modify their behaviors, and sharing what they have learned with their peers. If all of these conditions occur, the online course has proven effective.

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