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How to keep motivation high in online courses

Tips for engaging employees in online training by focusing on time, skills, content and purpose.

When a new training course is offered in the company, not all employees jump for joy, but it can also happen that even the most enthusiastic staff at the beginning of the course, end up losing **motivation**.

This leads to a knock-on effect of lack of consistency, commitment and involvement. All of this translates into ineffective training courses that confirm the negative initial expectations of some employees.

How do you get doubtful students to take an online course, and how do you continue to convince them module after module that the course is worthwhile? It's not enough to create the best, interactive **eLearning courses** if you don't take into account one of the most important aspects of learning: motivation.

The solution we propose is to analyze the causes that hinder motivation in each phase of an eLearning project, from **needs analysis** to knowledge testing, taking into account some fundamental aspects: time, skills, content and purpose of a course.

Why is motivation lacking? The time factor

One of the main reasons that holds back employee enthusiasm for a new corporate training course is the time factor:

- courses take time away from work and then you find yourself running or putting in extra hours in order to get your tasks done;
- courses take up free time and limit the hours spent with the family if, for work reasons, you are forced to take them at the weekend or in the evening after work.

To prevent the time factor from holding back or causing employees to lose motivation, it's important that the course leaves all the flexibility of being able to access the training from any device or classroom, at the most convenient time. Training pills delivered via **microlearning** could be the right solution for learning at the time of need.

Employee skills and loss of motivation

Let's try to think about language courses for a moment: as exciting and innovative as they are, if the level assigned to the student is too high or too low, it's pretty much a given that they won't be finished. To avoid alarming dropout rates in an eLearning course, it's a good idea to **test employees' starting skills** before the course begins, so that you can assign everyone the most suitable one. In larger companies, with more staff, the best thing to do is to give learners the opportunity to customize their training plan by choosing the modules of interest and even then, provide quizzes to help them understand if they should repeat the module or proceed to the next one.

Lack of motivation due to online course content

Content, including the format in which it is presented (video, **podcast**, simulation), is the core of a training course. If it's not relevant and doesn't reflect **trainees' expectations**, it can spell total failure for a training course. In addition to doing a **needs analysis** with which to understand what the **skills gap** is for a particular job, it is also helpful to involve employees in the creation of the content. Sharing their skills and experiences in turn, channeling them into user-generated content is a great way to keep motivation high.

Motivation in an online course: purpose and rewards

In **gamification**, the application of game elements to learning, challenges with peers, leaderboards, and reward are intended to increase learner engagement and, consequently, their motivation. In a corporate training course, the drive should also take on more personal and concrete connotations, not limited to the game itself. In practice, the trainer should provide an answer to the most important question, "Why should I take this course?"

Career advancement is one of the driving reasons. Be careful, however, to propose an improvement that is not too distant in time. Taking a certain training course helps prepare you to handle an event that will take place over a few months and where managers will be chosen for a certain function is definitely more challenging than a vague promise of promotion. Doing **training on new products**, helps you reach your sales goal by Christmas and having a prize to use for Christmas gifts, is another example.

Finally, it is helpful to incorporate feedback from current and past trainees into each course both to improve the training offerings based on the input received and to show the students themselves the views of their peers.

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