ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

Year 7 - number 257 Wednesday 26 July 2023

Mistakes to avoid in occupational safety training with eLearning

eLearning is a very advantageous tool for occupational safety training. To reap the maximum benefits, however, adequate planning is needed

To guarantee a healthy and safe working environment, occupational safety training is a crucial element: reduce risks for employees and organisations, ensure that every collaborator has the right knowledge and skills useful for recognizing and assessing the risks of injury and preparing emergency plans that are not limited to being disregarded documents is a duty for every company. Accidents and accidents at work are still too high, a sign that the collective commitment must be constant and better oriented. In recent years, eLearning has gained increasing popularity as an effective and flexible training method that can make a valuable contribution to this goal. Like all tools, the advantages that eLearning can provide largely depend on the awareness of its characteristics and the way in which they can be used. **Avoiding errors in the use of eLearning** greatly **improves occupational safety training.**

eLearning in occupational safety training

With eLearning we refer to learning via digital platforms, which allow you to use educational content in audiovisual format, to converse with teachers via videoconference, to download educational material and to access pupils' forums. In the context of occupational safety training, eLearning allows you to offer interactive and accessible courses that cover a wide range of occupational safety topics, such as accident prevention, the correct use of tools and the adoption of sure.

Different online training modules can be implemented on eLearning platforms: these can contain interactive courses, webinars and even virtual simulations that allow participants to acquire practical knowledge and skills in a controlled environment. This approach makes it possible to overcome the logistical limitations of traditional training, such as the need to organize classroom sessions or manage employee work times, and thus optimize the use of economic resources and collaborators' time.

The advantages of eLearning in occupational safety training

eLearning offers numerous advantages in the field of occupational safety training:

- Flexibility
- Accessibility
- Cost optimization
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Quick updates

eLearning allows employees to access training materials anytime, anywhere, **allowing for greater flexibility in scheduling and learning**. This is particularly beneficial for organizations with employees working in different locations or with flexible working hours.

A broad audience can access the eLearning platform, including employees with disabilities or specific learning needs. **To ensure adequate levels of accessibility**, training materials can be designed to be accessible through assistive tools such as screen readers, closed captions or printable versions.

This training method can be cheaper than traditional classroom training**: eLearning reduces the costs associated with the rental of physical spaces**, those represented by printed teaching materials and the travel of the participants. Furthermore, eLearning allows you to train a greater number of employees at the same time, reducing costs per participant: economies of scale reinforce the economic convenience of this tool.

In order to better evaluate the training of collaborators, **eLearning platforms allow for more detailed learning monitoring**. Not only are a large amount of data relating to assessment tests more easily usable, but also those generated during course participation, interaction with colleagues and teachers. Businesses can thus track progress, quiz results and employee assessments, enabling any gaps in training to be identified and corrective action taken.

Finally, eLearning allows you to easily update training content in response to regulatory changes or new best practices in occupational safety. This ensures that employees always receive up-to-date and relevant information.

Common mistakes in occupational safety training with eLearning

Having said the advantages that eLearning can provide for training on occupational safety, we must also warn that the benefits of this tool depend on the conscious use made of it. Without proper preparation and planning, many of these benefits could be lost. In particular, in training on occupational safety with eLearning, it is possible to run into some errors that can compromise the effectiveness of the learning and limit the desired results. Below, we'll explore the top mistakes to avoid when implementing eLearning in occupational safety training.

- **Lack of content customization**. A common mistake, which concerns the training contents provided, is their **lack of customization**. Every company has specific needs and requirements in terms of occupational safety, and training courses must reflect these specificities. For example, depending on the sector to which it belongs, and the specific processes and tasks that are carried out internally or at customers' premises, different safety risks may arise: from those connected to fires, to those for electrocution or 'poisoning; from those connected to work at height, to those for suspended loads. Using generic or standardized material can be uninvolving and not fully meet the needs of users. It is essential to tailor the content to the specific situations and challenges of each organization's working environment.
- **Lack of interactivity and involvement.** Another mistake that can be made is the **lack of interactive and engaging elements** within training courses. eLearning offers numerous possibilities to make learning engaging and immersive, such as interactive quizzes, simulations, videos and realistic scenarios. Without these elements, an eLearning training course risks resembling too much a normal video course many decades ago and not providing all the promised benefits.
- **Poor course design and structure**. Poor course design and structure can lead to **disorganized and confusing training**. The absence of a well-structured and logical learning path can make it difficult for participants to acquire and assimilate information effectively. It is important to organize the material clearly, define clear learning objectives for each section, and provide a gradual progression that facilitates understanding of the concepts. Figures such as the subject matter expert and the instructional designer have the task of collecting and ordering the material to be provided and evaluating how to present this educational material.
- **Inadequate assessment of acquired skills**. Another mistake to avoid is the inadequate assessment of the skills acquired by collaborators during the training course. This evaluation is essential for measuring the effectiveness of the training and identifying any gaps in the learning process. Using simple verification quizzes at the end of the course may not be enough. It is then important to incorporate regular and thorough assessment throughout the training to ensure that participants have indeed acquired the necessary occupational safety skills: small summary quizzes at the end of each module are just as important as the final exam, for example.
- **Not giving due importance to the practical dimension of training**. Finally, a common mistake is to ignore the practical dimension of occupational safety training. Theory is important, but it is equally crucial to enable participants to apply the knowledge gained in practice. Understanding how this error is generated is easy: since the eLearning tool is optimal for distance learning, one could be misled into thinking that this method is the only one necessary. On the contrary, a right mix of theoretical activity, through remote learning, and practical activities is the combination that maximizes the results and the final preparation of the employees.

For this purpose, eLearning can be enriched by incorporating practical activities, exercises or simulations that bring the learned skills into play in realistic situations.

Solutions and strategies to avoid errors

To avoid the common mistakes in occupational safety training with eLearning, it is important to adopt effective solutions and strategies. Below, we'll explore some key approaches to improve training effectiveness and maximize the benefits of eLearning:

- Customize the training content and adaptation to specific needs

- Use interactive and engaging tools
- Design well-structured and intuitive courses
- Implement effective and measurable assessments
- Integrate hands-on training into eLearning

Personalization of training content is essential to ensure that training courses are relevant and effective. Understanding the specific needs of the organization and employees is the first step. It is advisable to conduct an in-depth analysis of occupational safety training needs and to adapt the content, examples and scenarios to real situations in the working environment. This can make training more engaging and relevant for attendees.

To maintain the attention and interest of the participants, it is crucial to use interactive and engaging tools. As already mentioned, eLearning offers a wide range of options, such as interactive quizzes, simulations, videos, hands-on exercises and realistic scenarios. The inclusion of interactive elements allows participants to put the acquired knowledge into practice, fosters engagement and improves information retention.

Well thought out design and structure are key to ensuring that training courses are effective. Organizing the material into clear sections of increasing complexity facilitates gradual learning. Defining clear learning objectives for each section helps participants focus on key aspects. Using an attractive visual presentation, with an intuitive layout and clear language, helps make the training accessible and understandable for all participants.

To measure the effectiveness of training and evaluate the level of proficiency acquired, it is necessary to implement effective and measurable assessments. In addition to the traditional verification quizzes, it is possible to use open-ended questions, practical activities, simulations or group assignments. Incorporating assessments throughout the training course, not just at the end, allows you to identify any learning gaps early and make corrections or insights.

To ensure the applicability of the skills acquired, it is essential to integrate practical training into eLearning. This can be done through hands-on exercises, virtual simulations or even participation in field workshops. Hands-on training allows participants to experience the learned skills first-hand in real or simulated situations, consolidating the learning and preparing them to meet workplace safety challenges effectively.

By implementing these solutions and strategies, you can greatly improve the effectiveness of occupational safety training with eLearning. Next, we will explore a case study highlighting a successful example of using eLearning for occupational safety training.