

How to cut through the clutter to create new digital learning paths

By  Anton Cabral

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How do organisations motivate their employees to make time for learning, and encourage them to engage with knowledge that's essential for career success - when they're already overwhelmed with information and short of time? It's a challenge innovative employers and human resource departments are tackling head-on with the development of on-demand digitally-enabled learning paths...



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Recent pop-culture reporting has led us to believe that the human attention span has decreased to approximately eight seconds, marginally more than that of a goldfish. But while the research is somewhat flawed and questionable, it brings home a message: we face a daily barrage of news, data, facts, gossip, information, infotainment, RSS feeds, blog posts, memes etc... information exposure that leaves us more distracted than ever before.

If we think about it, how much time can an employee really take out of a busy week to attend a day-long training programme? If you've been in seminars and conferences lately, you'll know that most people are keeping one eye on the speaker, and the other responding to emails: productivity must go on.

In time-pressured environments where learners aren't always able to attend in-person lectures and classes, learning systems need to be more flexible and accessible when they are needed. This is where the introduction of digital learning paths is set to revolutionise the way Learning Management Systems (LMS) of the future deliver essential training.

The creation of new learning paths – digital learning paths – that seamlessly connect learners with formal, informal, internal and external content, while giving them an element of control over the time, place, path and pace of training, are the 'new black'.

Mobile devices are the new classrooms

Internet enabled devices are a powerful tool for quick, on-demand, point-of-need instruction – for those requiring

information on-the-job, and on-the-go. This is why digital learning pathways are so successful – they deliver a new blend of elements: various modalities, formats and solutions that cater to the needs of users. As a result, employees are no longer constrained by time and place – they no longer miss out on opportunities to learn.

However, for a progressive digitally-driven LMS to be effective, it needs to be about more than offering just data and facts. Gone are the days where it was acceptable to deliver training material solely via pdf's or PowerPoint decks. Nowadays, employees expect the same, slick sophistication of design they experience as online customers outside the workplace.

Boring content is a no-no

Attention to the curation and presentation of digital learning content is essential. Whether instruction is delivered through a mix of articles, video-clips, interactive quizzes, text, animation, gamification, live-streaming, web-tutorials, adaptive software and the like... it needs to be crafted to warrant a willing return by users, time and time again. High quality digital training materials – be they micro-learning nuggets of knowledge, or deeper-level macro-learning – need to knock the user's socks off!

One-touch content discovery

The internet has made information more readily available than ever before, and it's another aspect that needs consideration in the design of an effective LMS. It's important to acknowledge that not all information sourced online is equal in quality or reliability (cue: fake news). For knowledge workers who regularly engage in online content discovery, the development of a learning experience platform (LXP) that aggregates relevant content to reflect the company's point of view is invaluable - particularly when it is structured in a way that can be accessed at the touch of a button. As an example, with a slick LXP, organisations are able to educate and train their people through a broad mix of SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model) compliant learning, and external assets like TED Talks which are only a click away.

Great gains all round

The key to designing effective digital learning paths for employees lies in creating and curating content that is engaging, accessible, reliable, and relevant to users. When organisations provide their workforce with growth opportunities through training, employee satisfaction and loyalty are also positively impacted. Apart from boosting their time to proficiency, they'll also be driven to support the business on its path to success.

ABOUT ANTON CABRAL

Anton Cabral is partner and managing executive at LRMG Digital Agency. He began his career in computer-related positions after completing a BSc in Mathematical Sciences (computer science and informatics). He then joined LRMG in October 2004 as part of the e-learning team.

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