Digital Learning: It’s all about the design

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Digital learning is facilitated by technology. Using any cutting-edge technology or the best social platform for learning is not a panacea for all corporate difficulties in Learning & Development (L&D). It is the design that matters. So how do we design an effective digital learning framework? I say, focus on the “learning” part more than “digital” part. Let’s think from a learner’s perspective. Today, learning is a continuous process because it can afford to be.

With organizations spending a lot in L&D, employees are expected to learn fast. They need to learn at the speed of business need, and business is constantly changing. What you learn today, might become obsolete tomorrow. If you enrol for a certification, by the time you attend the training session and walk back, that technology might have become outdated. That is why Digital learning is the need of the hour. It helps you learn at a pace that traditional learning will never be able to match. It is imperative that one must give attention in creating an effective design and choosing a technology that suits the design to cater to the demands of the changing business. In our transformation management team, we have conceptualized a framework for digital learning that focuses on the following 4 pillars:

**Big picture is Important**

The first step is to create conviction as to why there is a need to learn. The urge to learn is created only out of curiosity. For example, a new system is going to centralize operations in the organization. Everyone is asked to learn the new system and new way of working. In this scenario, people need to know that a new system is on its way, why a new system is preferred and what are the benefits of learning to use it. When one understands that, then learning will only help in improving day-to-day work the learning curve improves.

Through repeated and effective communication, the business benefits have to be conveyed to people, so that interest is created. Attractive posters, comprehensive newsletters, short info bytes, animated cartoons, roleplay videos, leadership speaks videos, podcasts that convey business need for a new way of working, needs to be sent out prior and throughout.

In a landscape where people are generally encouraged to do continuous learning also, such repeated and regular communication leveraging digital platforms will help nurture a culture of learning.

**Learning Embedded in the Job**

In today’s busier lives, learning should be made relevant to the job. This can be done best by embedding learning in the job. In our previous example, to learn a new system, usually a demo of it is given to all. A trainer, using a projector, shows the new system and explains it. However, as soon as you walk out of the room, you forget a major part of it and then while using the new system, errors pop up. This causes a lot of frustration and slows down adoption. One session does not help you understand everything.
This is where technology comes in play. In many of our training projects, we have captured the application in a manner that the learner feels he/she is in a classroom and is attending a live training. This video is easy to access in an online platform, and you can access it any number of times you want, while you are learning the system which helps you to learn on the go. We have also made videos available on mobile device. This is how you can use technology to assist you.

Adaptive Learning

One size does not fit all; everybody learns in their own way. Learning styles have to be incorporated in the delivery. Having said that, this is one of the major challenges while designing a framework, especially if the audience is large. Content curation, channel of delivery and duration of delivery are some of the factors that influence learning.

For example, our team has focused on role-based learning. We segregated audience into different roles and tried to analyze the learning need for that particular role. By analyzing the gap, the curation of content and duration of a particular session, has been designed. While content is accessible to both the project manager and developer, they have different learning purpose from one single system. This has been understood and tailored accordingly while designing and delivering.

**Employee Experience**

The best part of digital learning is the experience it creates for the one who is learning. Be it the visual appeal of a simulation video, or the ease of access of an online library the experience digital platforms give is extra ordinary. Take complete advantage of the features of the LMS you are using. From a simple transition in a presentation slide, to audio mixing in an editing software, the L&D professional have a lot to choose from while designing delivery. When experience is great, learning becomes all the more appealing. Resistance reduces, interest stems, and learning becomes implicit.

**Conclusion**

The key to create a good design is to empathize with the learner. Identifying the gap and needs of a learner is the foundation for any learning and also Digital learning. Digital technologies help you to craft a good experience for the learner, but the take away is how well the gap was closed. The future of digital learning lies in effective designs that capture and convey knowledge in the best manner possible.
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