Effective Online Training for Employees by Robert Thompson

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Society, in general, has turned to the internet to improve and simplify quality of life in a variety of ways. Be it purchasing event tickets without having to wait in line, connecting with people where it would normally be impossible to meet face-to-face, or getting news that is up-to-the-minute, each process has been improved by going online.

Safety training is no exception. Not only is online safety training making more effective use of resources (time and money), it also allows individuals to set the pace for their learning which helps to improve comprehension.

Unfortunately, traditional classroom training procedures all too frequently fall under one of the two following categories.

The Dull Routine Robot-like instructors at busy safety training facilities repetitively deliver training material by rote. The familiarity of repeated content often results in a monotone, memorized delivery. The constraints of the course plan and restricted timelines limit success. As well, classrooms are often filled with disengaged workers who have attended similar courses numerous times due to various client-site training requirements. This unfortunate process is in desperate need of attention.

The Hurried Process Training duties are frequently managed by internal personnel with numerous job functions and pressures, most commonly in small organizations. The result is training personnel who have little practice and even less practical experience due to their concurrent administrative duties. All of this results in a training experience where slides or pages are read aloud and questions from employees are deferred to their supervisors (assuming the question is remembered when the employee arrives at the job site).

Occupational Health & Safety legislation requires the employer to ensure personnel have the required information to work safely, to understand and respond to the hazards they are exposed to, and, if needed, to perform a safe evacuation. Unfortunately this has been interpreted by many as a requirement to expose personnel for specific periods of time to training content without consideration of individual learning needs and comprehension.

The courts have echoed this in cases where the defense established that the written content was extensive and orientations conducted, but in the end, the process to convey the required information was lacking, comprehension was not verified, and training was not maintained.

So, is there a way of providing training that moves at the pace of the student, confirms individual comprehension of key points, and is just as good on the first day of training as it is a year later? Simply put, yes.

Online training, when professionally designed, includes subject matter experts in the development and determination of content, videos, narration, pictures, questions, and exercises. Professionally produced and designed training focuses on ensuring worker comprehension and allows a consistent level of training as long as it is being conducted.

Why best-in-class online training is the most effective:

1) Individuals learn at their own pace. They can pause, rewind, and listen to training content again.

This enables each individual to learn without the pressure of a classroom setting where they may feel judged by the questions they ask or any additional time they require.

2) It is accessible at any time and from any location. The requirement to miss work or be away from family to attend a course is removed. This allows training and retraining to complement on boarding and operational processes.

3) Frequent comprehension-checks that stress key concepts ensure information is maintained. This ensures the retention of current information as legislation, industry standards and processes change.

4) Online training includes digital media (video, audio, pictures) that explain and clarify scenario-based training where a written explanation or oral description may not be adequate.

Any form of practical or online training will benefit an employee. However, at the pace of today's society, online training is the most cost and time effective, and the most flexible approach toward individual training, while ensuring better employee comprehension.

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Robert B Thompson is a Senior Manager with over 17 years of experience in multiple aspects of the risk management field. His working experiences range from technical health and safety auditing, HAZMAT instruction, security assessments, facility licensing, critical incident investigations to legislative interpretation and advocacy. Mr. Day currently holds the designations of Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP). Robert Day is expert writer of a supply chain management and a supply chain management System.

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