

Turning Online Learners Into Engaged Learners

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According to the Gallup Organization, engaged employees are more productive, more likely to be customer-focused and will remain committed to their employer for a longer tenure than disengaged employees. As more organizations embark on the “engaged employee journey,” they simultaneously try to build engaged learners. But this quest to create engaged learners is a difficult one, as chief learning officers can attest: Building engaging and interactive learning systems does not guarantee engaged learners.

So what can be done? How can learning departments create online environments in which employees are motivated and engaged to continuously learn and improve their performance?

That question was put to 151 CLOs who completed an online survey titled “Creating Engaged Learners.” It turns out engaged employees can become engaged learners, but CLOs must build learning into how employees communicate, network, collaborate and socialize both on and off the job. “Creating Engaged Learners” research identified five initiatives CLOs can do to help create a more engaged workforce through learning:

1. Weave More Learner-Generated Content Into Your Delivery Mix:

Consumers are now being told their input counts. They will come to expect the same interest in sharing their input in the world of learning. So ask yourself and your teams whether you are capturing consumer input when developing new courses and enhancing customer experience.

2. Leverage Consumer Devices For Learning: Learning should be as convenient as listening to music, socializing with friends or shopping on the Web. Already widely in use, the ubiquity of the MP3 player as a learning device was evident in the survey — 11 percent of the 151 respondents said they are experimenting with using podcasting for learning, and another 42 percent forecast they will use podcasting within the next 12 months.

3. Use Highly Engaging Design to Make Learning Interactive: Unsuccessful classroom learning results in a passive, usually unengaging experience. Learning design based on performance simulation or gaming, on the other hand, is inherently interactive. It measures its success based on how effectively it changes the behaviors of the targeted learning group. Thirty-three percent of the respondents said they use performance simulations today, but 48 percent said they will be using performance simulations for learning within the next 12 months. The use of games for learning is also forecasted to increase from 13 percent today to more than 30 percent within the next 12 months.

4. Train and Measure Your Faculty in Their Engagement Levels: Instructors are

crucial to creating an engaging learning experience. When 151 CLOs were asked whether they were training and certifying online faculty, however, only 27 percent reported to have any such program. This is in sharp contrast to online accredited universities, where most have developed extensive six-month training programs for online faculty that cover the basics of teaching online, methods to engage learners, online mentoring and joining a community of practice composed of other online faculty.

5. Create New Measures for Learner Engagement: The goal of creating engaged learning requires a learning organization to adapt its metrics. Ask your team: Are you capturing the experience of how your learners learn online? In other words, you must be able to track how learners are navigating through their learning environment. Engaging learners are active learners who are never satisfied with passively consuming learning. Instead they seek out ways to contribute learning back to the organization.

Finally, be sure to put the spotlight on active, engaged learners. Capture the unscripted stories of how learners are actively involved in learning to improve their performance on the job. This can show everyone that active and engaged learning is possible, and that it achieves measurable business impact.

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