



CRISIS L&D: DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING, FAST

BY MELANY BLACKWELL

The email arrived on a Wednesday afternoon. Critical training needed to be rolled out to a large cohort of several thousand people on Monday morning – on a shoestring budget. It was a high-profile project. The training was a matter of saving lives.

So, with no time to lose, it was a case of roll-up-the-sleeves and get it done well and fast. But how do we produce a quality learning resource under such constraints?



MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?

What sounds like an impossible scenario can be a harsh reality in times of crisis. Need we mention ‘COVID-related training’ and its impact on the way we do business since 2020?

Learning and development teams can be valuable champions of crisis communications and training if they are able to build on their strengths and can adjust their usual *modus operandi*. So, here are a few considerations to aid a successful high-profile crisis training project.

1. THINK BASICS

The need for speed leaves no room for L&D business as usual – which normally comes with planning cycles to design eLearning courses and training programs intended for a long shelf life in a learning management system (LMS).

What is needed during a time-critical crisis is a rapid development piece, homing in on the core message to be conveyed. Ask, ‘what does the minimal learning solution look like that covers all a learner needs right now?’

2. WHO? WHERE? WHAT? HOW?

Communication and training channels during a crisis may differ from where people normally access their training. When there is a need to deliver training to thousands of learners within days, face-to-face sessions are unlikely to be an option (especially during the peak of COVID), so digital is the way to go.

The learning piece needs to be able to be deployed

across all necessary and existing channels and devices, with minimal bandwidth and fit for purpose for the situation at hand. The channels can be an organisation’s own LMS, LRS or social learning platform, but may also need to include access through mobile and web channels. The chosen learning format needs to cater for a full suite of diversity and accessibility without delay.

3. CLEAR-CUT PROCESSES

It is important to assign clear, uncomplicated review cycles and accountability for content development. There is no room for a substandard performance in learning design, accessibility issues or unplanned technical complications when it comes around to delivery time on the Monday morning.

The same principle applies to input from subject matter experts and ensuring stakeholder reviews are tightly managed. Look for the shortest route to obtain definite, authoritative sign-offs on technical matters. Should in-house team capacity or skill be a threat to the project, engage trusted learning vendors with a proven track record of being able to deliver high quality fast. A job like this one cannot afford to go wrong – people’s lives were at risk.

4. TOOLS AND RESOURCES

This is not the time for long storyboarding or designing learning artefacts in an iterative, agile way; this is the time to be on-point with key learning messages. Think repurposed photography, rapidly produced video and illustration, and eLearning authoring tools that offer the flexibility to carry them all.



L&D TEAMS ARE ON A FRONT LINE DURING THIS PANDEMIC

Use authoring/design tools with templates, a range of interactivity effects that are accessible, responsive and platform agnostic – and that inexperienced learning authors could operate under remote instruction if required. If mobile deployment is needed, choose an authoring tool that is natively fully responsive, without the need to recode or manually adjust break points for different screen sizes.

5. MEASUREMENT

Typically, in a crisis, a watertight way to see who has completed the training is needed. Whatever learning platform and authoring tool is used, the end product

needs to seamlessly integrate learning analytics and big-data tracking into existing systems for fast and detailed reporting.

L&D teams have become much better at learning analytics over the past few months; some have learned about, and adopted, xAPI. Those teams will be ahead of the game in deploying rapid learning pieces with solid granular trackability for compliance and performance measuring purposes.

L&D teams are on a front line during this pandemic. They can be a catalyst for rapid development of quality crisis learning artefacts if they build on their wealth of experience, embrace tools which support rapid development using easy-to-use pre-built templates, with automation around responsive design and learning analytics.

In our high-profile crisis case, the COVID-related training was indeed delivered Monday morning and it was accessible immediately from any location, any device, automatically capturing learner data and completions for analytics.

Months later, we are able to validate that the training was timely and effective. As L&D professionals, we were rewarded in knowing our training played a critical role in keeping staff trained, and in turn, we helped save lives.



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Melany is the co-founder and CEO of App-eLearn. She strives to create learning opportunities to improve people's lives and community harmony is her hallmark. In 2020, Melany was recognised as a 'Global Female Business Leader of the Year'. To learn more about App-eLearn, email enquiries@app-elearn.com.