

SUMMIT TRAINING SOURCE, INC.

SUCCESSFUL SELECTION & IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE EH&S TRAINING

Whitepaper



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Learn what to look for in an online learning platform and successful strategies for implementing online learning into your overall environmental, health and safety training plan. Whether you are currently in the decision making process to use an online learning platform or are currently using online training, this information can help you make your decision and maximize the effectiveness of your online learning platform.



SUCCESSFUL SELECTION & IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE EH&S TRAINING

- I. Overview of How Online Learning is Used Today**
- II. Benefits of Online Training**
- III. What to Look for in Selecting Online Training**
- IV. Successful Implementation of Online Training**

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW OF ONLINE TRAINING

Technology has changed the way we live, work, think, and learn. Today's workforce has to process more information in a shorter amount of time. New products and services are emerging with accelerating speed. Online training enables businesses to distribute training and critical information to multiple locations easily and conveniently. Online training offers employers flexibility in when and where training can take place.

IDC, an IT market intelligence and advisory firm, estimates the global outsourced e-Learning market now exceeds \$5 billion and expects it to grow to \$14 billion in 2010. Experts find it difficult to calculate the precise size of the EH&S online training market, but they almost all agree on this: Online training will continue to grow at a much faster rate than videos, instructor-led, or other traditional training formats. ¹

In February 2009, ASTD's source for e-Learning, Learning Circuits, asked readers whether their organizations were considering e-learning as a way to extend the learning function during the economic downturn, 71 percent of respondents said yes. ² It is important to understand the different facets that are occurring in today's work environments. Online training is helping to shape the way we teach and we learn. Although no media has yet to replace another, many firms are adding online curriculum to their overall training solution.

¹ <http://ohsonline.com/articles/2005/11/beware-the-dark-side-of-online-ehs-training.aspx>

² <http://www.astd.org/LC/news.htm#041>

BENEFITS OF ONLINE TRAINING

Online training is proven to be one of the most fast and cost-effective means of learning. Primary among these benefits is the potential for return on investment. Delivering safety training via a browser based, interactive and self-paced curriculum is a cost-effective addition to any training program. The original investment pays for itself through more efficient and flexible training, greater comprehension, and less time away from production for training. Business results are where you get your true return on investment. Effective safety training delivered online leads to higher productivity and improved time to market.

- **COST EFFECTIVE:** Reduces training time, eliminates travel expenses, shortens replication and deployment time and expenses, meets compliance requirements, and increases scheduling flexibility by going on-line.
- **24/7 ACCESS:** Training content is available anytime, anywhere.
- **GLOBALIZED DELIVERY:** Workers can access their training from any computer with Internet access. Training curriculum is consistent across multiple work shifts, departments, and locations.
- **INTERACTIVE TRAINING:** Interactions and questions throughout the program are engaging, using state-of-the-art graphics, animation, and audio and narration to keep worker's attention.
- **SELF-PACED:** Each worker is capable of training according to his or her own schedule and comprehension level.
- **LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** Many online training programs are complete with a learning management system (LMS) which manages scheduling and tracking of the training.
- **CONSISTENT CONTENT DELIVERY:** Centralized administrative and customization functions mean consistent delivery of training material and content company wide.

The biggest benefit of online training, however, is that it eliminates the expense and inconvenience of getting the instructor and students in the same place. According to Training Magazine, corporations save between 50-70% when replacing instructor-led training with electronic content delivery. Opting for online training also means that courses can be pared into shorter sessions and spread out over several days or weeks so that the business would not lose an

employee for entire days at a time.³ Soft skills, industrial skills and safety, health and environmental compliance training are being conducted online and organizations are beginning to reap the monetary and qualitative benefits of implementing online training solutions for their employees.

ONLINE TRAINING THAT ENGAGES THE LEARNER – SELECTING YOUR ONLINE TRAINING PLATFORM

Many of the same obstacles to effective safety training that we find in traditional training situations can occur with online training if the training does not engage the learner.

Market research indicates that boredom is a serious obstacle to safety training. These programs are merely online “page-turners” that present EH&S content in text format only; these programs come across as boring, dull and unsuccessful. Effective online training programs contain high-end, engaging graphics, animation, narration and video. Additionally, online training programs should contain real-world interactions in which the student is required to apply learned information. Strategically placed throughout the course, interactions provide improved comprehension and retention of critical materials and content as well as a greatly reduced dropout rate. Interactions should also be more than quiz questions. Multi-media presentations are very important when the student is in a self-paced learning situation.

Content is another key to success with any online training platform. With any training program you are evaluating from a resource, you should ask where the content came from, who developed the content, and ensure it is technically accurate and meets your standards. If not, can the content be easily changed or adapted to your site specific requirements.

Narration is important when looking into online training. This is a feature that can be easily overlooked when reviewing a course, but the narrator essentially becomes the voice of your training. An authoritative and dynamic narration is best suited for adult learning. Monotone or computer generated voiceover is highly ineffective. The text on the page should match the narration exactly. Although many of your students may prefer to read the text and turn off the narration, to ensure consistent learning and full comprehension, students should receive the same information either way they choose to learn. This is especially important for students who may be unskilled at reading.

³ <http://www.thetrainingworld.com/articles/elearningadvantages.htm>

In order to replicate the interaction of a classroom style training presentation, students should have access to learning resources during the training. A messaging system for Q & A with an authorized member of your safety staff should be available at all times. This allows the student to ask questions, and may actually prompt the student to ask more questions than they would in a traditional classroom setting amongst their peers. Other options should include a glossary, which can be customized, the option for remediation when a quiz question is answered incorrectly, and pre- and post- tests to measure knowledge gain.

For the training administrator, testing is important. As a safety or training professional, it is important that you have an understanding of what the testing portion of the online learning should accomplish for you. Options such as customizing or editing the quiz questions, ensuring quiz questions are randomized, or quiz passing grade settings should all be evaluated.

With all the benefits to online training and a number of vendors in the marketplace to choose from, here is what to look for when selecting your online training:

- *Credible Vendor:* Choose a vendor who has been in business for at least 2 years and has a proven track record with references to prove it. Your vendor should allow you to demo a full version of the program and help you with implementation and IT services.
- *Service:* Look for a vendor who is going to provide you with assistance throughout implementation and afterward. Beware of hidden IT service charges and customization fees.
- *Product:* A digital page turner or a portal with training materials is not online training simply because it is deployed over the internet. The aforementioned benefits of online training should be standard in the online training program you select. The program should also be user friendly. Thoroughly demo the program or have your vendor demo the program with you so you are fully aware of the course content, the administrator functions and the customization capabilities.

TEN POINTS FOR SUCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The following 10 points are essential for any successful strategy for implementing online safety training:

1) Establish Objectives

It is vital that any organization understand exactly why they are implementing an online learning program. What benefits are you seeking? What do you hope to accomplish? By establishing specific objectives, you will have a blueprint available for step-by-step implementation of the system.

2) Promote/Sale Up, Down and Sideways

Implementation of any online learning system requires company-wide promotion and participation. Every level of the organization needs to be communicated with concerning the benefits of the program. Convince your workers and management of the positive features of this new learning tool.

3) Make the Technology Invisible

Workers should experience a seamless interface with the online learning environment. It should be as simple as navigating to the training login and launching the training. Programs should be easily accessed without any downloads or IT hurdles to overcome.

4) Know Your Audience

A company must gauge its workers' computer skills and learning abilities. Many industrial workers do not have advanced computer skills. A brief overview of mouse, keyboard, and basic computer skills could prove to be a wise investment in overall training.

5) Make Sure the Training Has Value

Workers should understand the positive value of the training they receive. Can your organization provide incentives and positive reinforcement for the training?

6) Have Someone Accessible

An administrator or supervisor should be within reach to answer questions concerning the program or training materials. Knowing that someone else is standing by to assist alleviates some of the anxiety for many workers.

7) Provide a Learning Environment

In addition to having someone available to assist workers taking the training, it is also important to have the training take place in an environment that facilitates learning. The training area should be free of unnecessary distractions and provide a comfortable setting for learning.

8) Facilitate Time for Training

.In order to maximize the training experience, adequate time should be set-aside for the worker to complete all of the training necessary. Many online training programs offer a bookmark feature that allows training to be completed in multiple settings if necessary.

9) Promote Feedback

In order to fine-tune the implementation of any online learning program; solicit feedback from all of those involved in the training process. Encouraging positive feedback will enable you to increase the effectiveness of the training itself.

10) Establish Criteria to Measure Success

What benchmarks do you have for your training program? How do you know if you have been successful? By establishing a set of training goals early on in the implementation process, it is then possible to measure and document success along the way.

SUMMARY

In a study conducted by the Multimedia Training Association in conjunction with Stanford University, companies reduced traditional training time by 48% with interactive computer-based training. However, a reduction in training time isn't truly a return on your investment. The training needs to be effective at helping you prevent accidents and incidents and helping you meet your safety training goals. Implementing online learning should not be stressful, and in the long run should make completing important safety and compliance training easier.

Successful online training programs keep workers' attention with interactive, state-of-the-art graphics, animation, and real video. Interactive online training should be more than a PowerPoint™ presentation offered over the web; it should engage the learner and reinforces learning through creative questions and exercises.

By selecting an online training vendor that is an expert in developing technically accurate EH&S training and delivery systems, who also offers helpful customer support, and following an implementation strategy, utilizing online learning in your work environment will have a positive effect on your overall safety program.