

Give them a **Why**?

Connect
Emotionally

Tell a
Story

Let learners know why they're taking the program and what value they should expect to gain from the program. People like to get oriented and know what's expected of them. Most often we either tell learners at the beginning of the learning program why it is important, or in the case of online learning, we print it on the first slide. That is the last time the 'why' is mentioned or even considered.

We need to explore how, and why taking this program is going to make their life, their job or their situation better? What goals will they be able to accomplish? Each person has their own "why". Tapping into that "why" can be challenging, but once you help them identify their own "why", their motivation to engage with the content increases.

What are ways you can help learners tap into their why? Hint: Telling them why up front usually is not very effective. By understanding your audience and what motivates them, you can tap in to that in your development.

Example: A learning program that is implemented to help employees improve their customer service skills can also help the employee get better ratings on their performance evaluations and earn them a promotion. Making that connection during the learning program may be a critical motivator.

Emotions trigger a chemical reaction in the brain that stimulates retention and recall. Stories touch our emotions so use stories and emotions to connect learners to the material so they will remember the information.

Learning

is a **Process**
not an event.

Repetition +

Reinforcement +

Recall/Reactivation =

Retention

For learning to stick it needs to be a process – not an event. For long lasting learning and true behavior change to take place, it must take place over time, with lots of time to practice, make mistakes, evaluate and move on.

Micro-learning is a great way to teach simple concepts in a short period of time but does nothing to change behavior for the long term. You can use micro-learning within the 'process' but should not be used as the process itself.

Watching a child learn to walk is an exercise in frustration and delight. We remember the delight and minimize the frustration because all of the falling rarely results in any real damage to the child or their ego. It's just part of the process. We expect the child to fall numerous times. We understand the process and we expect it to take time.

Learning should not always be neatly packaged and easy. We have come to expect that learning should be easy, quick and painless. Real learning isn't a one-time event, yet many elearning programs are built with that mentality. Instead should be an iterative process where you do something, receive feedback from which you can evaluate your progress, make adjustments, and do it again.

Repeat information in as many ways that you can that does not get boring or redundant. Also, use building blocks to introduce concepts and build on the complexity or difficulty of the material. Practice recall and reactivation on a regularly scheduled time interval to maximize retention.

Avoid Cognitive **Overload**

No **Distractions &**

Easily Understood

Key

Message &

Value of **3s**

Focus on one key message to prevent cognitive overload. Within three days of learning something new, the brain will only be able to recall one key message and possibly three supporting messages. Trying to teach more than that may be interesting at the time, but does not last.

Do not let other elements like multi-media or visual elements distract from the core message.

Be sure to use terms and language that is easily understood.

Boredom & Frustration

Learners

don't like to **Fail** so...

Put **Learners**

in charge of their **Learning**

and **Give** them ways to

Collect Information

Going back to the example of a child learning to walk, it takes a lot of willpower to fall down and continue getting up. Few people like to fail, and to do so publicly is even less favored.

This is especially true of learners. Learning should present an opportunity to let people fail (or practice becoming successful) in private and safe environment with lots of feedback.

Unfortunately a lot of learning fails to exploit this opportunity due to our need to score and track everything. As learners, our culture conditions us to avoid failure. Typically our grading systems reward successful test taking more than successful learning.

Because of this, we're motivated to pass tests and get good scores. We're not always focused on the actual learning process. We tend to look to the short term goal of passing a test versus the long term goal of retained knowledge and acquiring new behaviors.

Learners may or may not need ALL the content to achieve their "why". Unless it is a compliance program and/or they have never had any exposure to the content, ask yourself, do they REALLY need all the content? Find ways to allow them to explore the content and apply it to their own situation.

This is a great way to counter the locked navigation issue. Locked navigation occurs in online learning when the learner has no option to progress through the module except to hit the 'next' button.

Create situations where they need to make decisions and then free up the navigation to allow them to collect the information needed to make those decisions. This is a much better way to assess understanding than viewing a screen full of text. Give them problems to solve and access to resources to help them solve the problems.

Isn't that what real life on the job is like?

Focus on
Relevance AND

Only test on the
Relevant or
Critical Aspects
of the course.

We have all worked on projects where the learners are never considered. Is the content truly relevant to the learner? How do you know? Have the learners been consulted?

Assessing can slow the learning process. As soon as people find out they're being tested, they tend to quit learning and focus on how to pass the test.

To avoid that, you may want to make assessment part of the learning. Build assessment into the content. Level the content so they cannot move on to the next level if they don't demonstrate mastery at the current level. Keep in mind, assessment does not always have to be a 'test'.

RULES
of
ENGAGEMENT

The Art & Science
of Learning



Use **Multimedia**
to **Enhance**
the **Learning**
Experience

Make it visually
Appealing

Use media appropriately and liberally, when it makes sense. Do not use it just to spice up the program. You must ensure it is relevant to the objectives and that it is engaging.

Capturing their attention is relatively easy with a captivating visual design. Keep in mind, it may capture their initial attention but if you don't employ the other technics, you will lose them quickly. There are some fantastic and realistic 3D programs. The initial response is usually great, but once they realized it was simply a really nice looking linear, talking head presentation, we tend to lose the learners quickly.