docebo®

6 STRATEGIES
for creating engaging e-learning

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember.
Involve me and I learn." - Xun Kuong, Confucian scholar

For e-learning to be effective, it must be engaging. That's the bar—and it's not a low one.

Here are some practical tips to help you build a learning experience that gets results for both your people and your business.

1. Know your learners

It's not uncommon for e-learning that's mapped to personas to get 50%+ more engagement than e-learning for a generic audience.

Using personas helps L&D teams ensure that the learning they're delivering is relevant and optimized for their audience. There are many variables to consider, including:

How tech-savvy is the audience?

This will impact how you deliver the learning. For example, if you have critical learning that needs to be delivered quickly to an old school, non-tech-savvy audience, you would want to keep things as simple as possible, even at the cost of some engagement and interactivity.

docebo®

How is the audience's day structured? What's their availability like?

This is a variable that's often overlooked. Let's compare a sales and a development team:

Sales teams' days are often broken into many small slices—a meeting, a call, a short drive, etc. And when they aren't moving between these activities, they're probably living in a CRM platform (like Salesforce). For an audience like this, it makes sense to prioritize bitesized microlearning content, as well as learning in the flow of work. Integrating learning directly into tools like Salesforce would be a powerful way to increase engagement and minimize the cost of context switching.

A dev team, however, has less fractured calendars. They may have several hour+ blocks of uninterrupted time each day. This means that learning can be delivered in larger chunks. And because devs are used to interacting with social tools like StackOverflow, social learning functionality would be a natural fit. This may seem counter-intuitive, since devs are often less social and more introverted than salespeople—but that's the importance of knowing your audience!

TIP: How would you feel if a stranger from another office came over and tried to teach you how to do your job? Not great, right?
To properly train or teach someone, you first need to understand who they are and what they do. You can't be the stranger from another office.

docebo®

2. Make learning programs interactive and engaging

Distraction and boredom are the worst. Seriously: They have sinister mustaches, dress all in black, and cackle instead of laugh. They are the mortal enemies of learning. Avoid them at all costs.

Fortunately, most monsters have a weakness, and distraction and boredom are no exception. Like a vampire fears sunlight or a werewolf hates silver, distraction and boredom shrivel when exposed to interactivity. Here are a few tips to make your learning programs more interactive and engaging:

docebo®

Leverage collaboration and social learning.

These are incredibly powerful tools. Humans evolved to learn socially, and some research suggests that social learning approaches have a 75:1 ROI ratio compared to formal web-based training.

You can do this in many ways. The simplest is to use a learning platform with social features, so that your learning audience can demonstrate their expertise and learn from their peers and leaders. Prioritize discussion features and a way for users to author and rate content. This method has the benefit of scaling organically: As your audience of learners grows, so too does your audience of potential instructors and content creators.

Of course, you can also learn socially the old-fashioned way: By having in-person learning sessions. This is still powerful and effective, as long as your audience is interacting and collaborating—not just listening to a lecture. However, this structure can be hard to scale for large, asynchronous teams.

TIP: CPP Investments is a global investment organization that does interactive learning right. They have three guiding principles—integrity, partnership, and high performance—and employees must understand these principles deeply. Every year, the fund runs 'guiding principles day,' where all employees spend a full day learning about the guiding principles and sharing real examples of how the principles have influenced their work and decision making. This creates a salient and social environment, solidifying learning.

docebo®

Tailor learning to the context it will be used in

There's a reason astronauts train in gigantic swimming pools and on dizzying-altitude flights. It's so they can actually experience the sensation of weightlessness before they leave Earth. Of course, they could just read about weightlessness, or watch videos about it. But NASA (and other space agencies) understand something that many businesses forget: To truly understand something, you need to experience it.

In a similar way, if you want to improve the skills of your sales team, use a tool like Gong, which records real sales calls. This makes abstract concepts (like 'building rapport' or 'emphasizing product benefits') concrete and real. There's also the benefit of being able to watch their peers in action, which is much more interesting than listening to a course instructor they've never met.

Use this sort of 'peer-based' instruction whenever possible. We can't help but be curious about what our peers are doing. We want to learn their secrets, compare their style and techniques to our own, and grow beside them.

Make managers a part of the process—from day 1

If you want your e-learning course to be successful, the people impacted should be involved from start to finish. If managers have input into the content and method of delivery, they'll feel like it belongs to them, too. Plus, your end-users are much more likely to engage with learning when their manager is engaged.

docebo®

# 3. Learning modules should be beautiful and easy to understand

Most learning materials should look more interesting and be written in simpler language.

An excellent study by Harvard examined what makes visual material (like infographics) memorable, and it found that colorful, stylized imagery was much more memorable than 'clearer' and more direct tools like bar charts. So don't be afraid to stylize and brand things like charts and graphs; rather than obscure the information, you'll actually be making it more memorable.

docebo®

On the written side, there's a landmark study with a title that tells the story: [Consequences of erudite vernacular utilized irrespective of necessity: problems with using long words needlessly.](#)

If you've ever tried to read a scientific paper, a legal document, or a technical spec sheet, the results won't surprise you: Complex language is hard to understand.
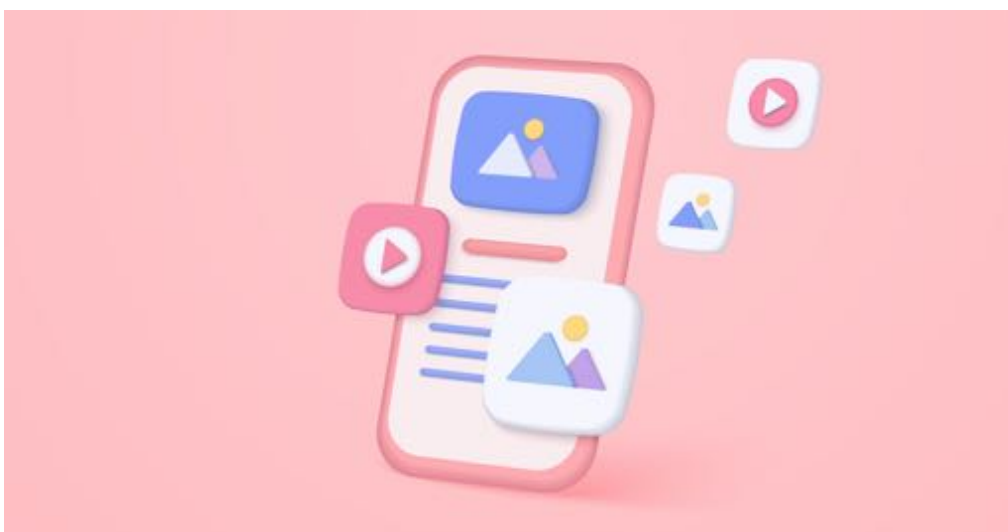
This result is extremely robust and it applies in ways you might not expect:
- Even experts who are well-versed in a field's jargon strongly prefer simple, jargon-free language.
- A speaker or instructor who uses complex language is rated as less intelligent than one who speaks simply—by both laypeople and experts.

So if you want to design engaging learning, pick up a thesaurus and simplify the jargon, argot, terminology, lingo, and vernacular.

Of course, content creation can be resource-intensive, often requiring dozens of hours and thousands of dollars to create a single hour of e-learning content. But if content creation is a challenge, we have a solution for you. [Docebo Shape](#) uses AI to generate simple and beautiful learning content from assets you already have. You feed it slide decks and documents and it spits out elegant and engaging content, automatically.

docebo®

4. Set clear learning objectives

People learn for a reason. They learn to play guitar because they want to reduce stress or jam with their friends. They learn new software so they can be more productive or earn a raise at work. Learning needs an objective. And an engaging learning strategy brings this sense of purpose to business learning.

When designing a learning program, you can start with a tool called Bloom's Taxonomy, which organizes learning objectives by complexity. From simplest to most advanced, the levels are organized like this:

docebo®

Create
Evaluate
Analyze
Apply
Understand
Remember
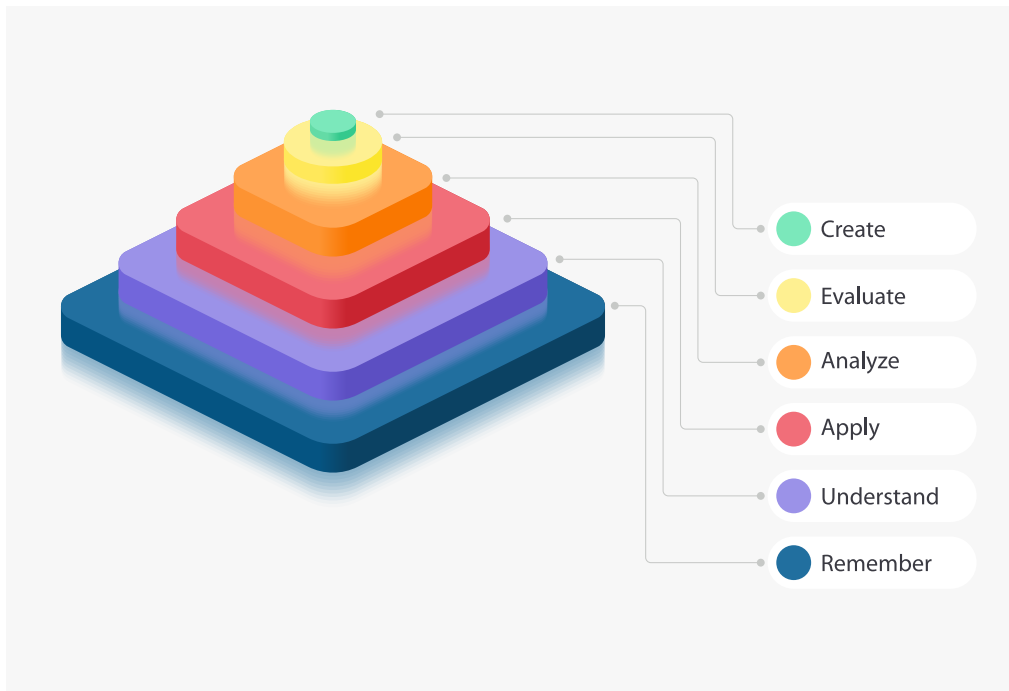
So before you develop a learning plan for a specific skill, make sure you understand what level learners need to reach first. For something like GDPR compliance in the EU for example, developers may need to be on the 'Evaluate' level, since they're creating the systems that interact with user data. Other employees may only need to reach the 'Understand' or 'Apply' level, since GDPR doesn't directly impact their work.

TIP: Of course, the mere setting of learning objectives isn't sufficient. You need to do something with them. Ask yourself:

- What do the learners need to know?
- How will we be sure that they know it?
- What will we do if they don't know it?

docebo®

5. Use action mapping for tangible outcomes

Action mapping (created by instructional designer Cathy Moore) is a powerful framework that can help you focus learning on behavior change rather than knowledge acquisition. This is a more effective and efficient way to do what business learning is trying to do: Achieve a tangible outcome. Here's the gist:

Begin with a concrete, measurable goal, like "increase sales of ProductX by Y%." Then, work with your learners to identify all the actions that need to happen to reach the goal. Actions might include things like "identify qualified leads who need ProductX," or "call customers who use ProductX and ensure they plan to renew." Make sure that the actions you choose are already being measured.

docebo®

See where this is going? Now, you can look at each action and see what barriers are impeding it. What's stopping people from doing these things? What skills or training do they need? This is like a root-cause analysis, and you will often be surprised by what you uncover.

Next, design learning materials that directly target these actions and remove the corresponding barriers. Avoid knowledge-checks and multiple-choice tests and keep the learning as close as possible to the real day-to-day work. For example, run practice calls or generate sets of real leads. And only include materials or information that directly impact the target actions.

By following this process, you'll be able to have a bigger impact on your target outcome. And since you know the outcome is measurable, you'll be able to correlate its improvement with your learning program.

TIP: Identify simple goals and measure the outcome
- Identify the tangible business goal you want to achieve
- Figure out what people need to do and what's standing in the way
- Design activities and training that build those behaviors
- Keep it simple and only include what's needed

docebo®

6. Keep learning organized and integrate it with other business tools

Admins and learners want the same thing: a simple, intuitive system that makes learning easy. When organizing your learning programs, try to create hierarchies of organization. For example, which courses are mandatory and which are supplementary?

This is where an LMS can help, serving as a central repository and single source of truth. With the right LMS, you can easily manage translation, personalization, version control, and more.

docebo®

[Integrating your learning system](#) with the tools you're already using will also help. At the simplest level, your learning system can integrate with learners' calendars, making reminders and notifications much more visible than they would be otherwise. And if you want to see truly amazing results, work on integrating your learning with tools like Salesforce. That way, people don't need to enter a new ecosystem to learn and grow; they can learn in the flow of work.
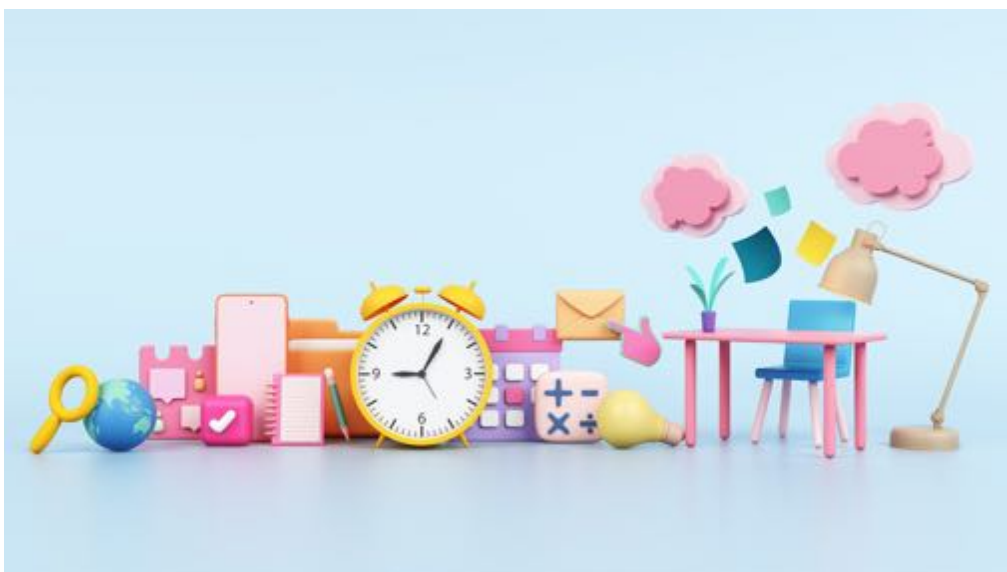
Execute these six strategies with one simple solution: the world's best learning suite.

Remember: engaging e-learning content isn't an aspiration. It's a requirement. Docebo can make it easy. Let's chat and we'll show you how.

Schedule a call

docebo®